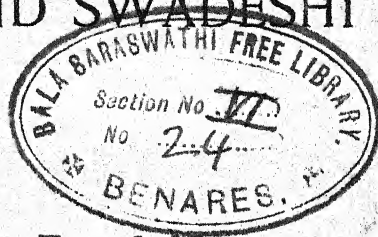


ART AND SWADESHI



Founded by
SRI GANGADARENDRA SARASWATI SWAMI.

BY

ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY, D. Sc.

MADRAS

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at connoisseur at eating work
Kon-mis-ster
at connoisseur at speaking work

ART AND SWADESHI *

If you go into one of those shops frequented by tourists in Indian towns, you will find amongst the flimsy wood carving and shallow brass work, the cheap enamels and the overloaded embroideries which are outward manifestations of the degradation of Indian craftsmanship, a few examples of real old Indian manufactures. These things, which used to be common in every market and were at once the wealth of the Indian people and the basis of their export trade for the last three thousand years, are now rare and difficult to obtain; they are called *purani chiz*, 'old things.' They are bought by American connoisseurs and German collectors for museums, for the education of Europe in design and for the benefit of the European manufacturer, for whom, too, they are reproduced in such papers as the *Journal of Indian Art*, and lectured on in Technical Schools and Schools of Art. For while the creative power of the craftsman has been long destroyed by commercialism in the West, it remained alive with us till yesterday, and even to-day some part of it survives.

Indian design is an inexhaustible treasure-house of

*Reprinted from the Central Hindu College Magazine. This essay has also appeared in the 'Message of the East' which will not be reprinted in its present form.

fine invention. But have you ever reflected that all this invention belongs to the past—that modern India, Anglicised India, has produced no beauty and romance, but has gone far to destroy the beauty and romance which are our heritage from the past? Go into a Swadeshi shop—you will not find the evidences of Indian invention, the wealth of beauty which the Indian craftsman used to lavish on the simplest articles of daily use, the filmy muslins or the flower-woven silks with which we used to worship the beauty of Indian women, the brazen vessels from which we ate and drank, the carpets on which we trod with bare feet or the pictures that revealed to us the love of Radha, or the soul of the eternal snows. You will not find these things, but you will find every kind of imitation of the productions of European commerce, differing only from their unlovely prototypes in their slightly higher price and slightly inferior quality. You will find dingy grey shirtings; other materials dyed with aniline dyes of the loudest and least permanent; travelling trunks that are painted every colour of the rainbow, and if carefully used may hold together for half a year; boot polish, marking ink, soaps and fountain pens—anything and everything but beauty. It is the outward sign of the merely material ideal of prosperity which is too exclusively striven for by our economists and politicians. I shall show presently how even such an aim defeats itself, but in the meanwhile let us take another view.

You are familiar with the thought that the highest

ideal of nationality is service. Have you ever thought that India, politically and economically free, but subdued by Europe in her inmost soul is scarcely an ideal to be dreamt of, or to live, or die, for? "India, vulgarised by modern education, and by the ideals of modern commercialism, will never compensate humanity for India with its knowledge of beauty." Have you ever realised that there are European artists who believe that when a new inspiration comes into European art it will come again from the East? Do you realise that when India was a great political power in Asia, when she colonised Java and inspired China, this also was the period of her greatest achievement in art? Has it never occurred to you that it is as much your duty to make your lives and your environment beautiful as to make them moral, in fact that without beauty there can be no true morality, without morality no true beauty? Look round about you at the vulgarisation of modern India—our prostitution of art to the tourist trade—our use of kerosine tins for water jars, and galvanised zinc for tiles—our caricature of European dress—our homes furnished and ornamented in the style proverbial of seaside lodging houses, with cut glass chandeliers and China dogs and artificial flowers—our devotion to the harmonium and the gramophone—these things are the outward and damning proof of "some mighty evil in our souls."

Try to believe that this callousness of ours, this loss of the fine taste that belonged to classic and mediæval culture is a sign of weakness, not of strength. Try to

centuries ago; but whose condition is more destitute, whose homes are more squalid, whose means are more uncertain, whose prospects are more hopeless than those of the poorest serf of the middle ages and the meanest drudges of the mediæval cities." Remember that one-tenth of the English people die in the work-house, the gaol or the lunatic asylum. Therefore learn not to waste the vital forces of the nation in a temporary political conflict, but understand that art will enable you to re-establish all your arts and industries on a surer basis, a basis which will bring well-being to the people themselves; for no lovely thing can be produced in conditions that are themselves unlovely.

Take one concrete case. "The Mirzapur carpets were at one time admired for their fast, bright colour, but are now identified with whatever is inferior in the name of dye or design. Aniline dyes and foreign models are responsible for the decline of a trade which gave fair promise of development not many years ago." Now observe that mere bad taste alone, the lack of artistic understanding, in such a case has destroyed the livelihood of the maker of dyes and the maker of carpets, and ruined even the possibility of an export trade.

The truth is that without artistic understanding, Indian manufacture cannot be effectively restored. It is suicidal to compete with Europe on a basis of cheapness. Competition should be upon a basis of quality.

At the same time the competition in cheapness alone

is destructive of the very fibre of the Indian people: for "industry without art is brutality."

Swadeshi must be something more than a political weapon. It must be a religious-artistic ideal. I have heard nationalists exhort each other to sacrifice, in using Swadeshi goods. To think that it should need to be called a sacrifice! At least it should not, as now, be a sacrifice both in cost *and* quality. If we loved and understood Indian art we should know that even now the Indian craftsman could, if we would let him, build for us and clothe us in ways of beauty that could not be attained to in modern Europe for any expenditure of money at all. We would if we might, even to-day, live like the very gods but we lust after the fleshpots of Egypt, and deservedly our economy suffers.

Therefore I say to the well-to-do, that it is better to spend two hundred and fifty rupees on a Benares Sari, dyed with the country dyes, though two hundred would pay for it dyed in aniline, than to subscribe ten times that amount to some Swadeshi factory for making nibs or cloth and from which you expect a handsome dividend. And for the poor also in proportion to their ability remembering that "a poor man, by building the smallest temple, is no less meritorious than a wealthy man who builds the largest."*

Remember also that from the standpoint of national wealth, a few possessions that will endure, are better than many that will last only for a day. The builder

* *Agni Purana*, Ch. XXVIII.

whose work will last five centuries adds more to the national wealth than he whose work lasts only for fifty years. So, too, the weaver whose fair work is handed on from generation to generation does more for his country than a weaver whose work has soon to be cast aside. Civilisation consists not in multiplying the quantity of our desires, but in the refinement of their quality.

But let us not love art because it will bring to us prosperity ; rather because it is a high function of our being, a door for thoughts to pass from the unseen to the seen, the source of those high dreams and the embodiment of that enduring vision that is to be the Indian nation ; not less, but more strong and more beautiful than ever before, and the gracious giver of beauty to all the nations of the earth.

SWADESHI, TRUE & FALSE.*

All those who have studied the Industrial Arts of India unite in recognizing and deploring their profound decay, and in very many cases, their practical extinction. Investigation invariably shows that goods that ought to be, and once were, common in the market, are now only to be seen in Museums. One hundred, or even fifty years ago, it would have been possible to fill many Museums worthily with the every-day handwork of Indian artisans : now this would be hardly possible after years of patient *only* collecting in remote districts. During the nineteenth century India has in fact, ceased to excel in those Industrial arts which provided the bulk of her exports, the main source of her wealth (after agriculture), and of the refined luxury of her homes during a period of time that must be counted in millenniums.

During this period—if we are to judge from the wreckage of her Industrial arts remaining to us—we must rank the civilisation of India indeed highly, for it could have been truly said that in her homes, whether of rich or poor, there could be found nothing that was not either useful or beautiful. In exchange for this world of beauty that was our birthright, the nineteenth century has made

Read at the 5th Annual Industrial Conference Allahabad, 1910.

of our country a 'dumping-ground' for all the vulgar superfluities of European over-production ; and all that the Swadeshi movement of the twentieth century has done is to provide us with many spurious imitations of these unlovely inutilities.

It could hardly have been otherwise, for behind the Swadeshi movement there is no serious and consistent ideal. Its leaders have had but one thought before them—to save money. The movement has lacked almost totally in those constructive elements which we meet with in similar movements in other countries, such as Denmark or Ireland. Never have I seen in any Swadeshi literature the wish expressed to preserve Indian manufactures on account of their intrinsic excellence, or because the presence amongst us of these highly skilled craftsmen represented an important element in the national culture, or because these craftsmen still worked under conditions of life still infinitely superior, physically and spiritually, to those of the European factory-slaves.

Too often the leaders of our political movement have forgotten (as men forgot in the early days of the development of European industrialism) that elementary principle of statecraft, that *men are of more account than things*. They have forgotten that the goal of all material civilisation is not labour but leisure, and that industry without art only brutalises and degrades. For *things* then—things economic, political, temporary—they have been willing to undermine both our immemorial industrial culture, and to degrade the status and destroy the physique of

those artisans who once served us so faithfully and who even now if we would let them, *would* make our cities and our houses beautiful again. I know no sign more ominous for the future of the Indian civilisation, than our utter indifference to social industrial idealism, and the heartless callousness with which we have cast aside the services of those who built our homes, and clothed and wrought for us in the days before we learned to depise our own culture,—leaving them to eke out a precarious living by making petty trivialities for tourists, curio-collectors, and for Anglo-Indian bungalows, or to drift into the ranks of menial labourers or factory hands. Do you think that we can thus degrade the status of so many men without impairing the vitality of our national life and without injuring the basis of its possible prosperity?

We, who think that we are educated and progressive, we, who attend conferences and sit on legislative councils, who are rulers of states, or earn more princely incomes in courts of law, we ourselves have despised and hated everything Indian, and it is by that hatred that we have destroyed our industries and degraded the status of our artisans. And when at last our pockets were touched—then so far from realising what we had done, we set ourselves to form Swadeshi companies for making enamelled cufflinks (with pansies on them), for dyeing yarn (with German dyes), or making uncomfortable furniture (for Anglo-Indians). We never thought that the fault was in ourselves. We lived in caricatured English villas, and studied the latest fashion in collars and ties and sat on

something more like that intelligent boycott of worthless importations from Europe (and their imitations made in India) which Lord Curzon so passionately advocated at Delhi.

No less than forty years ago Sir George Birdwood wrote "Indian Native Gentlemen and Ladies should make it a point of culture never to wear any clothing or ornaments but of native manufacture and strictly native design." How we should have scoffed at this idea then! Even now there are Bengali gentlemen who bring home trunks full of English dresses for their wives after completing their studies at the English bar: and it is not ten years since the students of the Calcutta School of Art went on strike, and were strongly supported in doing so by the Bengali press, because an Englishman dared to think that real Indian art instead of second rate European might be made the basis of the teaching in the school. It is true that things have changed during the last ten years, and a change once begun progresses swiftly: but the amount of change is still insignificant, and we are only to a small extent less parasitic than the last generation. It is a marvel to me how any self-respecting people can endure for a day, not the system of government,—but the system of education from which we suffer, a system which is a far deeper and more perpetual insult to our culture than any of the incidents in railway trains of which we hear so much. The Education Court at the late United Provinces Exhibition, for instance, was little more than a gigantic advertisement of

English schoolmasters and Messrs. Macmillan. There was practically nothing Indian about it. It is not surprising that the products of such education do not care for Indian art. It would be more surprising if they did.

Let me now briefly analyse the chief causes of decline in Indian industrial art.

Every one knows that architecture is a synthesis of all the arts and that their prosperity is bound up with that of the art of building. Modern Indian architecture,* however, domestic or palatial, is at the very lowest ebb. The average modern house is a cross between a suburban villa and a Government barrack. The new palaces of most of the rulers of native States are, as Sir George Birdwood has remarked, like anything in the world except a habitation fit for kings. While European architecture is nominally the model, in India, "the essence of European architecture is supposed to consist in a reckless disregard of all recognized canons of ornament and proportion."

It is very true, as Mr. Lockwood Kipling remarked in the first volume of the *Journal of Indian Art*—"It is on the architecture of to-day that the preservation of Indian Art semblance of healthy life now hinges." Yet so far as I am aware it has never occurred to any Swadeshist politician to demand from Government that in public buildings Indian architecture should be the rule, and Indian architects employed or that the State should again patronise

* i.e., architecture as seen in the modern cities and as patronised by the 'English educated'. In many parts of India a very fine tradition of building still survives ; but it is being killed by neglect.

and foster Indian artistic industries. These things are still done in some of the native States : but not in all of these—Baroda, for instance, affords a conspicuously objectionable example of Anglicisation and total disregard of Indian artistic tradition. Nearly everywhere in India there are still living hereditary and most capable working architects—such as no other country in the world still possesses—but like other craftsmen they are being starved by neglect and forced to adopt menial or agricultural work for a bare living.

Living in pseudo-European homes naturally and logically involves and corresponds to the using of European furniture, clothes and finally, to an entire dependence on imported apparatus of material comfort and amusement—a dependence upon boxes of sardines and upon gramophones and on all that lies between them. In this process an accelerating touch is given by employing slightly educated Eurasian governesses to teach our daughters the use of knives and forks.

I should like to say in passing, that in speaking thus I do not mean in any way to disparage things European, as such. Nothing is further from my thoughts than that absurd notion which is expressed in the not uncommon saying, "that *our* ancestors were civilised when Europeans were 'dressed' in woad." As a matter of fact early Celtic and Teutonic Europe was much more civilised in some respects than we are to-day—at least it cared more for creative and imaginative art. What I do wish to point out is that *our imitations*, whether in Swadeshi factories

or in our lives, of things European are and must always be for ourselves socially and industrially disintegrating, and for the rest of the world wholly valueless.

Nor do I mean that we should never assimilate or adopt any foreign idea or custom. On the contrary I believe that even in such things as music and the plastic arts, and still more in sociology we have ~~very much~~ *some things* to learn from others, as well as to recover from our own past: only we do not show our progress in these things by taking to harmoniums, by buying German oleographs, or by adopting the crudest and least considered phases of a foreign culture. But let us recognise that by doing these things we offend both against the higher and the lower ideal of Swadeshi—the higher which is in our hearts, and the lower in our pockets.

Let us now study the process of disintegration further, passing from architecture, the main setting of our lives, to all the lesser elements of our environment.

"Not in Benares only" says Sir G. Watt, "but throughout India the fine old art designs that have been attained after centuries of evolution are being abandoned and models utterly unsuited and far inferior artistically are being substituted. The writer can confidently affirm that he found in at least fifty per cent. of the important silversmiths shops in India, the illustrated trade catalogues of European firms and stores being employed as the pattern books upon which their silver plate was being modelled." The natural result is that when you want a Polo Trophy, you have to go to England for it—for we

know that our Swadeshi imitations of European industrial art are never as good as the originals and are never likely to be. Swadeshi as we *now* understand it—i.e., erecting factories for naturalising European manufactures—is simply accepting for ourselves a permanent inferiority of environment, and irremediably lowering the standard of living amongst us.

The modern amongst us can already tolerate an environment of cheap hideousness and tawdry, expensive discomfort, which would have disgusted the poorest in the days of Hindu or Mughal civilisation.

Take Benares brass: at Delhi "all but one or two pieces were bad in design and worse in execution."

Take enamelling: "Formerly every attention was given to effect, and a background or field colour was regularly employed, most frequently a rich creamy white. Within the past few decades this has been discontinued, and complex and intricate designs substituted in which it can hardly be said there is a field colour at all. The result is distinctly inferior and may be described as garish rather than artistic."

A Benares Kinkhab manufacturer, asked to show a treasured pattern book, produced a sample book of English wall papers—"This at once explained the monstrous degeneration perceived in the Benares Kinkhabs."

The value of gold thread imported into India is now 44 lacs. It is much inferior to India handmade gold thread, now going out of use. The author of a monograph on Indian Gold lace remarks: "In such seemingly

minor and unimportant details the true cause of the artistic degeneracy of Indian weaving is to be found."

Exactly the same conclusion may be drawn from the imports of aniline dyes. In such cases we actually pay money out of pocket, to ruin our own industrial arts.

It would be useless to multiply examples here: those who wish may find them in the pages of all, Indian or English, who have written upon the industrial arts of India. I think no one will deny that these Industrial arts are in a nearly hopeless state. No one can ultimately deny that the main cause of this is our own deficient artistic understanding. It is, I repeat, far more necessary to cease our own boycott of the Indian craftsman, than for us to carry on a boycott of foreign imports.

In attempting to establish factories for the imitation of European imported goods we overlook one thing—the relative value of men and things. True Swadeshi would have attempted to preserve the status of our skilled artisans and village craftsmen, for the sake of the value to our country of men *as men*. Already it is being recognized in Europe that the general substitution of machines for men must invariably lower the whole intellectual and moral status of the working population: and we need not hope to avoid this result by tinkering at compulsory education. A False Swadeshi does not object to crowding the craftsmen into factories, where drunkenness, physical degeneration and all other natural results of

success. This is a parable of all the other Industrial Arts.

Secondly, the great manufacturers can take care of themselves. Business men will not fail to discover where money can be made. It is hardly necessary for us to assist them in becoming millionaires by bringing to their aid the whole weight of Swadeshi sentimentality. We have only to see that they injure as little as possible the physique and morale of the workers. Temporary cheapness is no guarantee of ultimate value from the standpoint of national evolution or even of private advantage on the part of the individual purchaser. Swadeshi does not consist in imitating new productions recently imported,—this may be left to the speculative businessman, who has his due place—but in restoring the status and the prosperity of the skilled artisan and the village craftsman. It is these artisans who most need the help of our national idealism. It is these skilled craftsmen also whom we as a nation most need as members of our body politic. We have enough of agricultural labourers and are like to have too many factory hands, and perhaps too many lawyers and clerks. To assist the skilled artisan and the village craftsman may seem too simple, too unromantic a thing for nationalists to undertake. Even national education requires half a century to bear its fruits. Yet it is assuredly only by such personal activity and gradual recovery of social co-operation that an end so great as the restoration of our status amongst the the nations of the world can be achieved. And it is almost

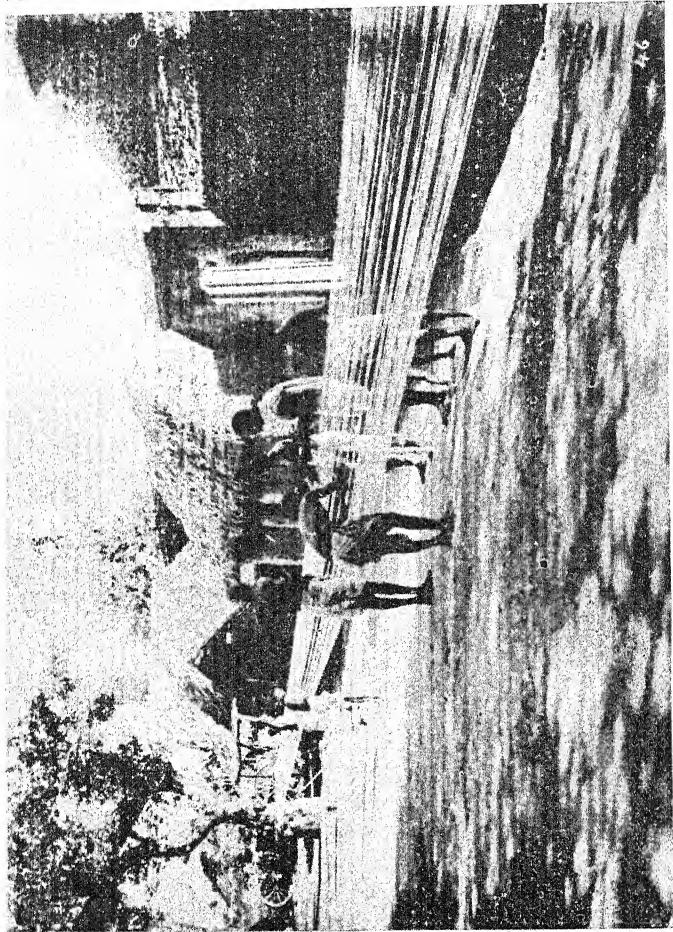
waste of time to work for ends that may or may not be achieved in ten or fifteen years : the greatest work is done by those who scarcely look to see its fruits within their own lifetime.

DOMESTIC HANDICRAFT AND CULTURE *

Let me begin with definitions. Once upon a time all handicrafts were domestic. It would not be far wrong to say that none now are so. But for the purpose of these notes I shall consider as domestic handicrafts those which have been, historically speaking, most generally practised in the home: it will be convenient to take spinning and weaving as the typical case, to stand for all the home industries which have been swept away by modern industrialism. I shall expressly exclude from consideration any mere accomplishments such as modern education commonly substitutes, especially in the case of women, for real and practical knowledge. The dabbler in fretwork, enamelling, or book-binding, who merely earns pin-money and undersells the trade, I shall also ignore. But the serious practice of a craft such as jewellery or book-binding under small workshop conditions stand nearly in the same relation to culture as the practice of an actually domestic craft, and should be considered, especially when the small workshop is in or near the home, so that the work going on becomes part of the everyday experience of the family.

* Lecture read before the Association of Teachers of Domestic Science, London, May 1910.





WEAVERS IN THE STREETS, TANJORE



went a more real knowledge of the qualities of materials, and the instinctive demand that they should be useful as well as attractive superficially. Under such conditions it was not as easy as it now is to pass off inferior wool, bad jam, and flimsy furniture upon the thrifty housewife, for she knew how to spin the wool, to make the jam, and her brother or a neighbour was the carpenter. Whatever may or may not have been gained by transferring the centre of production from the home to the factory, it is very clear that certain things have been lost. It is perhaps mainly a result of this non-acquaintance with the conditions of production that is accountable for the small respect in which workmanship is now held, and above all for the persistent demand for cheap pretentious goods on the part of those who formerly possessed solid and durable things. Under domestic conditions, whatever is made is made to fulfil its purposes. Under industrial conditions, nearly everything that is made is made primarily for sale at a profit, and it is almost a matter of indifference if the ostensible purpose of the goods be effectively attained.

There are scarcely any objects associated with our daily home life, which are not better made, in respect of quality, by hand than by machine. As I look around my study, I see nothing for which I have to thank mechanical production under factory conditions. I know well that no machine, not one of a thousand factories, can make for me a rug as fine as the unlettered wandering tribes of Central Asia can still weave in their own tents. No

steam saw or mechanism for machine carving can design my settle, or make my chair or table as I would have it. No photographs of the works of the great masters compensate me for the absence of a living art that could have built a modern house as beautiful in mass and detail as is the old one I am fortunate enough to live in. And of books, the best are centuries old, or are the product of modern hand-presses under small workshop conditions. Machinery, in fact, has not enriched our homelife. Even if it has brought to us the treasures of the ends of the earth, we have a heavy price to pay for these, nothing less than the destruction of such art at its very sources. The effect of substituting mechanical for domestic and small workshop production has really been this, that certain fine things which used to be obtainable in every market-place in the world are now only to be seen in museums. Because they are to be seen in museums, we imagine that we are cultured. But by their fruits ye shall know them. We know by their work that men of old were cultivated. What will future generations, judging by our works, think of us? For, as Watts once said, "scarcely a single object amongst those that surround us, has any pretension to real beauty, or could be put simply into a picture with noble effect." How does this affect our culture? Let us return to Plato. There is in all these things, such as weaving, he says, propriety and impropriety; and we must restrain the "ill, undisciplined, illiberal, indecent" manner, "lest our gurdians, being educated in the midst of

is a first consideration. It is not machinery that we need to abandon in our search for culture. We could ill spare the culture of the electrician, the engineer and the builder of bridges. All that we need is to use, not to misuse the power these men can give us. Let me illustrate by an example the relation of machinery to handicraft and culture. Take such a trade as carpet-making under modern conditions, by power looms. The operator has no longer to design, or to weave in and out the threads with his own fingers. He is employed in reality, not as a carpet weaver—such men no longer exist—but as the tender of a machine. He may, it is true, rise to a higher place, but it is only the place of a man responsible for the successful running of many machines by many men. He can never rise by virtue of his knowledge or experience in the craft itself, because, as I have said, the craft no longer exists. The craftsman himself can always, if allowed to, draw the delicate distinction between the machine and the tool. The carpet loom is a tool, a contrivance for holding warp threads at a stretch, for the pile to be woven round them by the craftsmen's fingers; but the power loom is a machine, and its significance as a destroyer of culture lies in the fact that it does the essentially human part of the work and imposes limitations on the spontaneity and freedom of the design and the imagination of the worker. These limitations re-act upon the user in the form of lifelessness, lack of temperament or response, in his daily environment.

I should like you to consider carefully the effect upon us of the nature of our daily environment. We all of us believe more or less in what we call association, we are sensitive to the personal impress surviving in the the relics of great men, the books they possessed or the letters they wrote ; and we should agree that no reproduction, however theoretically perfect, could ever have a value equal to that of the authentic work of a master's own hand. A beautiful description of an Indian lute, in the Arabian Nights, tells us that when its strings were touched, it sang of the waters that gave it drink, and the earth whence it sprang, of the carpenters who cut it and the polishers who polished it and the merchants who made it their merchandise, and the ships that shipped it. And which of us, who seek to surround ourselves with the work of human hands and hearts, is deaf to what the nomad carpet tells us of life in Central Asian tents, to what the moulded stone and adze-cut beam inform us of the mediæval builder, or the Saxon jewel of its wearer? Are we not also sensitive to the inventive force and loving care expressed in the work of modern craftsmen, in a volume from the Kelmscott press or a painted chest from Daneway House? And if we lacked this sensitive-ness, should we not lack just so much culture? But you cannot eat your cake and have it. Everything was once made in that personal individual way. We cannot keep that sensitiveness in a purely mechanical environment.

One of those men who are best described as

born travellers, lately remarked that the Burman "if asked to give his candid opinion after a year's experience of English life, would probably say that the position of the vast majority of Englishmen was not much better than that of chained slaves." And would the Burman be far wrong? I think not. For if it were a legal punishment for serious crime that a man should spend ten hours out of every twenty-four in a hole in the ground clipping tiny pieces out of small cards, or that a man should spend his days adding figures at a desk, I am sure that some of us of the Humanitarian League would have much to say of the barbaric cruelty of our prison system. It is only, I think, because men are now so accustomed to the idea of doing unintelligent work, that they can be got to perform such tasks as these.

There has lately been a great revival of appreciation of folk-music. How much of this music do you think is the product of factory conditions, and how much belongs to hand work and to the open air? What is the use of patronising an art like this, if the very structure of our society is for ever destroying the possibility of its continued growth?

The forces destroying culture move in a vicious circle. No individual ever made a gramophone because he loved music; but the gramophones made in factories are daily destroying the capacity for appreciating real music in the villages. I know of one Cotswold village where the local shopkeeper has no less than twenty gramophones hired

out in the local public houses, where men used once to sing themselves.

I have already alluded to one other phase of the relation between industrialism and culture. I mean the destruction of culture in other, particularly Asiatic countries, as the result of mechanical over-production in Europe. As William Morris wrote: "the Indian or Javanese craftsman may no longer ply his craft leisurely, working a few hours a day, in producing a maze of strange beauty on a piece of cloth; a steam engine is set a-going at Manchester, and that victory over Nature and a thousand stubborn difficulties is used for the base work of producing a sort of plaster of China clay and shoddy, and the Asiatic worker, if he is not starved to death outright, as plentifully happens, is driven himself into a factory to lower the wages of his Manchester brother, and nothing of character is left him except, most like, an accumulation of fear and hatred of that to him unaccountable evil, his English master." Perhaps the extraordinary meanness of the English or Dutch manufacturer who sponges on Indian or Javanese design, and reproduces mechanical and very inferior imitations of it very cheaply for the European or for the local Asiatic market has not struck you! The process is often described as "successfully contesting the village weaver's market." I shall not be so foolish as to suggest the governing of European manufacture by ethical considerations, for there is better work to do at present than such a

ploughing of the sand. I do, however, wish to point out that the solidarity of humanity, especially under modern conditions of easy transport, is too real to permit of such causes failing to re-act for the worse upon European culture.

In conclusion, therefore, I suggest to you that the substitution of mechanical production under factory conditions, for hand production under domestic or small workshop conditions, of such things as form the daily environment of our ordinary lives, is directly destructive of culture. For such things (mark the words such things—I do not mean everything) are better made under these conditions: their making is in itself educational—kindergartens are only necessary because these crafts have been subtracted from life; they make for rhythm and stability in our environment. Their preservation or restoration is theoretically justifiable, because under such conditions the necessity for earning a livelihood and the force of the creative instinct are the dominating factors, whereas, under wholesale industrial conditions, every other consideration is sacrificed to profit-making. Particularly I suggest that everywhere and always the competition between a man and a machine is destructive of culture. A civilisation which cannot effect between them a reasonable division of labour, does not deserve the name. The place of machinery in a true civilisation should be that of a servant, and not a master. It should carry out the simplest and most mechanical processes of manufacture, it should save

the craftsman from the heaviest and least interesting part of his work; but it should not rob him of that part of his labour which is his very craft. For if it does so rob him, not only is his own intelligence correspondingly destroyed, but the community has to accept an environment æsthetically and spiritually inferior, an environment that certainly does not express or produce what we understand by culture.

The problem is not how to abolish machinery, but how so to regulate it that it shall serve without enslaving man; how to stop competition between machine and hand work by defining and delimiting intelligently the proper sphere of each. The community cannot afford to dispense with the intellectual and imaginative forces, the educational and ethical factors in life which go with the existence of skilled craftsmen and small workshops. These must therefore—if we value culture—be protected in their proper sphere. The means to this end are the endowment of craftsmanship, and the transference of the control of production from the hands of those who exploit, again into the hands of those who themselves create. Without this we must, as a race, be condemned to “polish brass and iron hour after hour, laborious work, kept ignorant of their use:” to “spend the days of wisdom in sorrowful drudgery to obtain a scanty pittance of bread, in ignorance to view a small portion and think that All, and call it demonstration blind to the simple rules of life’

THE INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF APPLIED CHEMISTRY 1901: AND ANILINE DYES.

In a recent article with the above title, Prof. P. C. Ray contrasts the Indian with the German attitude to science, and taking the case of the discovery of alizarin dyes, explains what arduous labour is needed to prepare the way for such developments of new industries. "Germany" he says "is to-day reaping a rich harvest, it is because of the unselfish, devoted and whole-hearted labours of generations of chemists for nearly a century." The result of these labours has "revolutionised one of our leading industries, and completely destroyed a stable trade of France, Holland, Italy and Turkey" (and the East). "The cultivation of the various species of the Rubiaceae for the purpose of the dyer, which has continued for thousands of years down to our own times is now practically at an end." No question is raised as to the desirability, or otherwise, of this revolution in the dyer's methods and resources.

Let us look beneath the surface. We shall find a useful probe in one of the Platonic dialogues. In Plato's *Phaedrus*, a self-confident inventor (of the art of writing) appears before the King of Egypt, but the inventor is not

received with open arms. The King replies, in fact: "O most ingenious Theuth, one person is able to give birth to art, another to judge of what amount of detriment or advantage it will be to those who use it." Will it be amiss if we should enquire of the "most ingenious" scientist what amount of detriment or advantage there may be in the invention of these chemical dyes?

We may draw up a balance sheet. On the debit side we should have to set the dislocation of dying industries all over the world, and their replacement by factory work. The general effect of this process, in the aggregate, upon the physique and character of many millions of human beings has, like all changes, whether necessary or not, been enormous. Such changes and such results may sometimes be a necessary part of a progress towards a more secure, because more conscious civilisation. But they are not always so, and if the "ingenious men's" inventions are always accepted at their own valuation, are not likely to be always so. Consider the result in this case. Admittedly the object of dyeing goods is to make them beautiful; for many thousand years men have sought and won from nature the secret of her beautiful dyes, madder indigo and the rest. Now all these "natural" dyes are being superseded by the manufactured ones. Are the latter then more beautiful? Not at all. All artists, that is all that part of humanity whose sense of colour is most perfect, are agreed that the aniline dyes are almost always coarse and gaudy compared with the dyes they have replaced; it is also well-known that they

dyes!
are less permanent, and also that when they fade, the faded colour is particularly ugly, whereas the old dyes may be said to grow mellow, than to fade with age. A ghastly uniformity of colour is also established all over the world—a few cheap greens and reds imported in large quantities from Germany have destroyed innumerable shades and varieties of colour belonging to each district and even to each family of dyes. On the other hand, the immense resources of the chemist—more than half a thousand different synthetic dyes are already available—have enabled manufacturers to flood the market with such infinite varieties of shades of dyed silks and other raw materials as to make reasonable selection impossible.

To quote the authoritative words of a great European dye-master:

"Of these (aniline) dyes, it must be enough to say that their discovery, while conferring the greatest honour on the abstract science of chemistry, and while doing great service to capitalists in their hunt after profits, has terribly injured the art of dyeing, and for the general public has nearly destroyed it as an art."

What a grand achievement for science, what a mark of high civilisation is this!

It is not to the point to suggest (even if true) that beautiful colour *can* be produced by the use of aniline dyes, and *can* be made permanent. It is not the object of manufacturers to achieve their ends: they are incompatible with moneymaking on a large scale.

The introduction of refined and exact chemical

methods has had the same disastrous effect on other arts, such as enamelling, stained glass, and indirectly of course on all the textile arts such as weaving, carpet making, and cotton printing. In all these arts, the exploitation of chemical discoveries has rendered the true practice of art increasingly difficult, and has enormously reduced the sum total of beauty available in daily life. It is a melancholy reflection, that such should be, in so many directions, the reward of modern science.

The significance of all this was foreshadowed in the story of the fall of man. Years ago, in mediæval Europe, in India, and throughout the world under pre-Industrial conditions, the public had perforce to accept good art, good design, good colouring, (as Adam had to accept the garden of Eden) because nothing worse was available. Art was in the hands of hereditary specialists, whose simple methods produced the results which cannot be rivalled at the present day. Now Industrialism has placed an ignorant public at the mercy of exploiting manufacturers, who care nothing for art, but everything for dividends.

This process was probably necessary for progress. The choice of good and evil had to be presented in order that good might in the end be consciously chosen. The recognition of this fact should lead us to choose this good as soon and as consciously as possible. But we have not yet progressed very far.

What after all is the aim of civilisation? Do we wish to heighten or degrade our finer sensibilities? Should we wish in the end to raise all men to that capacity of

understanding colour which now belongs to the few, or should we wish to degrade to the common level of indifference, these few artists that remain like prophets in spite of us? Are we to place the possibility of material wealth for some—with its loss by others—above the true ideal of civilisation, the making possible of civilised life? I think rather, that as Mrs. J. C. Bose has put it in speaking of the education of Indian women, "In making our demand for greater and deeper education and material well-being, then, may we never forget to say, "But will this wealth bring me Realisation?"

If this fundamental ideal of Indian culture be applied to the problem before us, the issues clearly resolve themselves. We see that in such ways as this of increasing reliance on artificial dyes we are spending money for that which is not bread. Any true artist would far rather forego the use of dyes altogether, than continually injure his finer sensibilities by living amongst ugly and glaring colours, or amongst unhealthy and morbid imitations of faded natural dyes. It is only lack of education and lack of culture that make it possible.

Meanwhile, with the progress of scientific discovery, with the accumulation of resources which we seem able only to misuse, an enormous mass of true knowledge, of rational, useful science is being daily lost.

"The art of dyeing is still in a rude state in India as far as the methods adopted are concerned, yet in looking at the results which are attained they cannot be despised even by the scientific dyeing of the West. But

in the management of colours, the skill with which a number are employed, and the taste with which they are harmonised, whether in their cottons or their carpets, their silks or their shawls, Europe has nothing to teach but a great deal to learn." (H. H. Cole.)

"Uneducated natives may be found in almost every Indian bazar who can make alloys, colour glass, and work enamels by methods which are unknown in Europe." (Dr. Royle).

It is significant that at the Chemical Congress referred to in Prof. Ray's paper an important address dealt with this very point. Prof. Witt of Berlin, in an address to the Combined Sections of the Congress, pleaded eloquently for a study of the old empirical methods before these were lost entirely to humanity. "We have," he said "living empiricism at our door, which we allow to die and to sink into oblivion, without attempting to study it and to learn the lesson it has to teach—a treasure of information of incalculable magnitude hoarded up in the course of centuries by the skill and patience of countless millions of men who were, and are, as keen in the study of nature as they are reluctant to draw general conclusions from their observations.

"This great treasure is the industrial experience of the Eastern nations. It is an undoubted fact, and if it were not, a single visit to the South Kensington Museum would prove it, that the people of Persia, India, China, Japan, the inhabitants of Burma, Siam, Cambodia, and the innumerable islands

of the Pacific, are possessed of methods for the treatment and utilisation of the products of nature which are in many cases equal, if not superior, to our own. These methods must be to a large extent based upon chemical principles. Is it not strange that we know so little about them, and that little generally only indirectly through the accounts of travellers who were not chemists? If all these peculiar methods were fully known and described by persons who have seen them applied and watched their application with the eyes of a chemist, it would certainly be not only of interest, but also of the greatest utility to our own industry; for it is the elucidation of empirical methods which, in the new light that science sheds upon them, leads to new departures and to progress."

In this direction Prof. Ray himself has done invaluable service in the two admirable volumes on the History of Hindu chemistry which we owe to him. But there is room for much more to be done; and those who would truly serve their country and serve humanity, will devote themselves rather to the preservation of old arts and industries, than to the exploitation of new methods without regard to their true human and ultimate value. We need science, and above all concrete efficiency; but it is not *any* science or *any* efficiency that will help us, only a rational and humane science, and efficiency directed to high ends.

The discovery of aniline dyes may be due to the unselfish devoted labours of generations of chemists

but even so, it does not follow that there is anything "unselfish," though there may be "whole-hearted devotion" (to money), in the capitalist's exploitation of the scientific *kalpa-druma*. Science will be able to produce for us as many modern miracles as we desire. So long as we regard these as the end and justification of science, we remain but an evil generation, demanding signs, and bent on mere material well-being. But this will not be progress, nor civilisation. Do not then let us hold up to Young India an ideal of industrial science of an indiscriminating character. Let us learn rather to live than accumulate the means of living. Let us rather learn to refine our wants, to increase sensitiveness, than to multiply our wants and blunt our finer instincts.

THE FUNCTION OF SCHOOLS OF ART IN INDIA: A REPLY TO MR. CECIL BURNS.

In the Journal of the Society of Arts for June, 1909, there is printed a lecture delivered before the Society in London on May, 27th, by Mr. Cecil Burns, Principal of the Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy School of Art in Bombay.

The whole matter is of great importance in relation to the economic future of India, and the moral and intellectual significance and value of Indian Nationalism, for India and for the world.

I know nothing whatever directly of Mr. Burns himself. It seems to me that he speaks as one who is sincere enthusiastic, and well-intentioned; but I think that he, and his pupils, are equally victims of a system and a point of view which are likely to continue in the future as in the past, to destroy the possibility of sincerity, imagination and individuality in art, whether in Europe or in India.

I have twice visited the Bombay Schools of Art, and on each occasion was impressed with the entire lack of inspiration, the dreary futility of nearly all that was going on. The whole *regime*, from ideals to methods, like the education provided in Missionary schools and

contemplated in official Universities, was so entirely un-Indian as to explain at once the dullness of the results. It is the irony of fate that the one School of Art built and endowed by an Indian, should be the least Indian in aims and methods.

Mr. Burns' own acquaintance with Indian art seems to be entirely academic. I do not remember that there was a single good Indian painting on the walls of the school. However, I may illustrate the point by a reference to jewellery. No one possessing any serious knowledge of Indian jewellery could speak "of the massive proportions and primitive character of Indian jewellery." Mr. Burns is probably acquainted only with such jewellery as he has seen in museums, where anthropologists collect together whatever is primitive and barbarous, to the exclusion of what is refined and delicate. It is nonsense to talk of the "lighter and more delicate styles of workmanship of Europe." There are still hundreds of goldsmiths in India who can execute fine work in gold, such as few, perhaps no European craftsman could imitate. Sir George Birdwood, indeed, long ago contrasted the delicate workmanship of Indian jewellery, where the cost of workmanship is in very high proportion to that of the value of the materials, with the much heavier and clumsier English jewellery, valued mainly for its intrinsic worth. Amongst the Indian peoples, there are races in many different stages of culture, and it is observable that Anglo-Indians usually study and generalise from those

of the lower types. Mr. Burns appears to have gathered his ideas of Indian jewellery from the hill tribes. The goldsmith of Southern India, or the enameller of Jaipur has much more to teach than to learn in a School of Art—and I have heard art teachers in England express their desire to get such teachers if they could.

Mr. Burns, again, complains of the mixture of baser metals with Indian silver, and contrasts this state of affairs with the 'hallmarking' at Goldsmith's Hall in London, which guarantees the quality of English plate. Now, although Mr. Burns admits that "the European visitor has been the means of encouraging the faults most noticeable in the Indian silversmiths," he does not quite realise the significance of the degradation of standard he refers to. Perhaps the following story will explain that significance better:—"Formerly," says Sir George Birdwood, "a great industry in gold-embroidered shoes flourished at Lucknow. They were in demand all over India, for the native Kings of Oudh would not allow the shoemakers to use any but pure gold wire on them. But when we annexed the kingdom, *all such restrictions were removed*, and the bazaars of Oudh were at once flooded with the pinchbeck embroidered shoes of Delhi, and the Lucknow shoemakers were swept away for ever by the besom of free trade." Again Sir W. Lawrence writes of Srinagar trades: "The state exercised a vigorous supervision over the quality of the raw materials and the manufactured article. In the good days of the shawl trade no spurious wool was brought in from Amritsar to be mixed with the

real shawl-wool of Central Asia, and, woe betide the weaver who did bad work or the silversmith who was too liberal with his alloy. *There is no such supervision nowadays.*" Again, it is only in the *Native State* of Kashmir at the present day that the importation of aniline dyes is prohibited; everywhere else they have been allowed to do their destructive work unchecked.

Now what is this 'ball-making' of which Mr. Burns speaks? It is nothing more than the last forlorn relic of the once universally exercised power of the English guilds to protect the standard of production; and this relic is upheld by law. There is no reason why the present rulers of India should not have continued to the trade guilds the support which they received under Indian Kings; there is no reason why some guarantee of standard should not, through the still existing guilds, be enforced for Indian silverwork. There is a reason perhaps—that Englishmen do not so deeply care for the future of Indian art and industry, as to think much about the matter, but it is cruel at the same time to taunt the Indian craftsman with the degradation of his standard, as if that degradation had been of his deliberate choosing. No other causes than the withdrawal of State protection and the change in educated Indian taste (which does deserve contempt) are at the root of the evil in this case.

This change of taste is essentially snobbishness—for Indians are not content to be politically and economically dependent, but must fawn upon their rulers to the extent of anglicising their homes and their lives. It appears to

be the ambition of some to be English in all but colour. I am not surprised at Mr. Burns' statement, that out of over two hundred presents at a fashionable Indian wedding, only sixteen were of Indian origin. I should say that this eight per cent., fairly represents the 'Indian-ness' in the mind of a thoroughly anglicised and 'educated' Indian of to-day. One other instance of Mr. Burns' apparent ignorance of Indian art. He says that in India "painting and sculpture had never been considered except as parts of the decorative scheme of a building or some other composite work." It would take too long to show here, that this statement, which would be equally true of mediæval Europe, is merely another way of saying that all the arts were harmonised in one great unity, based, as all art must be, on architecture. The modern method of painting pictures and sticking them indiscriminately on nails about the walls of houses comes as near perhaps to the absolute divorce of art from architecture as is possible; but it is not a sign of taste on which to congratulate the moderns. The old Indians knew better, that walls were to be painted on, and that the heart and centre of the temple was its image; and neither painting nor image were executed apart from any consideration of the place they were to occupy. But I have spoken of Mr. Burns' apparent ignorance, and in so doing I referred to the fact that he here ignores the portfolio pictures of the Mughal period in Northern India; and as he has placed none of these exquisite things on the wall of his School of Art, I am

forced to suppose that he is not aware of their existence. The old Mughal nobles had the good taste, not to do the wall of their houses with miscellaneous pictures hanging at all angles (as they may be seen in the homes of 'educated' Indians to-day), but to employ the most skilled miniature painters, to paint for them pictures of the subjects traditional in North Indian culture, the portraits of kings and saints, the love of Laili and Majnuni, pictures of the chase or of war : and there are not wanting also Hindu subjects, Uma serving Mahadeva, and many a picture of the Lord of the Eternal Snows Himself. All these things, which more sympathetic and more understanding men like Mr. Havell and Mr. Percy Brown have collected in the Schools of Calcutta and Lahore and made the basis of their teaching, Mr. Burns ignores. It is only such portfolio pictures, which like a book, form in themselves a unity, that are rightly to be considered apart from architecture : but Mr. Burns informs us that painting in India was never so considered.

Two causes of the decline of Indian crafts, Mr. Burns has omitted to mention : one is the passing away of many Native Courts, as in Tanjore, where the Court was the great patron of the sumptuary arts ; the other the fact that India is not a sovereign State, with Ambassadors and Consuls scattered through the world to send Home information of the true requirements of those countries with which India might still conduct, as once she did, an export trade in the products of sumptuary art.

Mr. Burns is probably right in thinking that Indian

students must for a time be brought back into closer touch with nature. But are Englishmen the right men for this work? And must it not rather be by harmonising life with nature, than by merely imitating nature in a School of Art? The Indian must see with his own eyes. Two things are needful, one that he should be saturated with the traditional art of his race in order that he may know *how to see*, the other that he be saturated with the traditional culture of the East, that he may know *what to see*—for it would be meaningless to base the decorative art of a people upon rare plant forms (however beautiful) which have not appealed already to the race imagination and have no part in the race life or in their literature. All this merely goes to show that the work of truly restoring the arts and crafts of India can only be done by Indians. Englishmen can at best but help, as some have done; but some have hindered too.

Mr. Burns is afraid that Government, 'as is usual in India,' will have to show the way. Why not? As Mr. Burns points out, there are thirty Schools of Art in an area of about 100 sq. miles in London, having some 400 professors and instructors. The schools are supported by public grants. I do not know why it should be otherwise in India. I only wonder whether Englishmen as a whole, really wish to revive the arts and industries of India in such an effective manner as shall enable them to compete successfully with those of England.

The ancient craft work of India is not "as dead as the art of the Greeks or of the Renaissance in Europe."

Only one whose experience was confined to an anglicised, commercial, and unromantic town like Bombay, could think that. The crafts of India are, indeed, in a bad way: but they could be saved by a true national impulse, by a true Swadeshi spirit. But a Swadeshi that seeks only to boycott or imitate European manufactures, for a temporary political end will not save them: nor will four Schools of Art in India, administered by men who are prepared to acquiesce without remonstrance in the official decision to adopt European styles (*i.e.*, second-hand Gothic or third-hand Classic) in Government and other public buildings, save them any the more. Is it not, by the way, perhaps an omen, that the Victoria Memorial building in Calcutta, designed after much controversy, in the European manner, is slowly sinking in the Ganges mud?

Mr. Burns has a contempt for the way in which modern craftsmen "are content, to let their ancestors do their thinking for them." This is *one* way of looking at tradition; and perhaps there is some wisdom in giving a due place to the demand for a 'return to nature.' *And the more I see of Indian art the more* *Art. Bus.* I doubt whether it ever has been so 'divorced from nature' as to make it possible to speak of a 'return.' Only the modern imitations of European wares are really divorced from nature, inasmuch as they express nothing. But while it is true that art never stands still, and it is not sufficient to teach and to copy old designs, nevertheless India is not yet, and surely never will be so changed, that the whole spirit of her

decorative art must be changed too. It is much more the case that a return to nature, must be a return to sincerity and a return to nature in life itself. The arts of India must retain their Indian spirit, or become altogether worthless. The springs of art are in life itself, and when the life of the people is revitalised and re-inspired, this new life will be reflected in Indian decorative art. The applied arts cannot be isolated and located as a thing apart from the national life, and the future of Indian art depends on the future of nationalism amongst us. You cannot gather grapes of thorns: and a denationalised people, an India subdued by Europe, not merely outwardly, but in her inmost self, will not produce a national art. That India is not really so subdued, that the national movement that has stirred her deepest life has a deeper significance than one that is merely political and economic, has already been proved by the development of the National School of Painting in Bengal.

But if Abanindra Nath Tagore and his followers stand in this art revival of ours, to a certain extent in the place occupied by the pre-Raphaelites in the history of English art, where is our William Morris? Probably the time for his coming is not ripe. When he comes, he will do more for Indian applied art than all the schools together; but it is the function of the schools to make his path no harder than it need be.

The real difficulty at the root of all questions of Indian education is this, that modern education in India, the education which Englishmen are proud of having 'given'

to India is really based on the general assumption (quite universal in England) that India is a *savage* country, which it is England's divine mission to *civilise*. This is the more or less unconscious underlying principle throughout. The facts were more truly realised by Sir Thomas Munro, when he wrote that "if civilisation were to be made an article of commerce between the two countries England would soon be heavily in debt." Together with Persia, India is the world's great treasury of design. Having decided upon the establishment of Schools of Art, it might then have been expected that educationists would have enquired upon what lines artistic education was given by these master draftsmen to their pupils and apprentices. This however, would have been running counter to the principle above enunciated: and so, in times gone by, the old fashioned South Kensington routine was introduced into India; for more advanced students, drawing from casts of Greek statuary and Gothic architecture, water colour sketching and all the rest of it, with the result, that quite a large number of men attained a second or third rate English standard. Probably no Indian artist so trained has done work good enough to be accepted by the Royal Academy, much less, good enough to be refused by that august body!

The true function of Schools of Art in India, is not to introduce European methods and ideals but to *gather up and revitalise the broken threads of Indian tradition*, to build up the idea of Indian art as an integral part of the

national culture, and to relate the work of Indian craftsmen to the life and thought of the Indian people. So far from this, the School of Art craftsman has hitherto worked essentially for a foreign public, making things which neither he nor his own people desired to use, but only to sell. No wonder the hinges do not work and the legs are wobbly. When Indian craftsmen worked for the Indian people they knew what was wanted, and why, and their work was altogether serviceable. Now that they work for tourists or occupy themselves in carving furniture for Anglo-Indian bungalows, or in making tea-pots overloaded with cheap ornament for Anglo-Indian tea-tables, it is naturally otherwise.

I have said that the true work of Schools of Art in India to-day, is to gather up and revitalise the broken threads of Indian traditions. But who can do this work? Not many Englishmen possess the necessary patience, or the necessary will. Like all true education in India, this work must be done by Indians. It is a question of national education. This question, touching as it does the vital base of the whole of Indian life, is of more importance than any political or economic reform. Rather than the achievement of any measure of progress in those directions, I would see Indians united in a demand for the *complete and entire control of Indian education in all its branches*, and determined that that education shall produce *Indian men and women*—not mere clerks, or makers of pretty curiosities for passing tourists.

To this end one thing is needful—that the present

generation of 'educated' Indians should cease to be snobs. Mr. Burns perceives the true difficulty when he says that only a compelling movement from within the country could have accomplished the revival of Indian Art on traditional lines. That compelling movement lacked: and the result followed, that "India from an artistic point of view became and since remained a suburb of Paris and London, as she is the industrial suburb of Manchester and Birmingham."

The one great question to-day is this:—"Is the compelling movement within the country, which we call Nationalism, strong enough for the Herculean task before it, the conversion of a generation of parasites into a nation of orientals?" Every word of the answer to this question will be faithfully recorded in the progress or decline of Indian Art.

It rests with the Indian people themselves to say what the answer shall be.

ON THE STUDY OF INDIAN ART*

An art critic saturated with oriental traditions, when brought face to face with the remains of European art preserved in museums and galleries, will regard them in a different way from that in which we are accustomed to consider them. He will understand the drawing of Anglo-Saxon and mediæval manuscripts and the painting of the early Italians or the Flemish primitives; he will understand the Gothic woodcut and the portraits of Holbein, and be sensitive to the beauty of the sculptures of Chartres and of the mediæval ivory Madonnas. But when he comes to examine modern works, he must be at a loss. He cannot understand them—he knows, of course, what they represent, but they convey no meaning to his mind, they have no burden which touches his heart. We, on the contrary, usually understand, or think we understand, only the modern works, which we admire in proportion to their fidelity in imitating the originals. If by chance we meet with any idealistic or imaginative work, if we are transported magically to some wonder-world of love or terror undescribed in history, unknown to the geographer, we are able without difficulty to preserve our

*A lecture to the Royal Asiatic Society, London, 1910.

souls from enthusiasm, by labelling all such art as 'decorative', and reserving the other name of 'fine art' for representations of things that we have already seen for ourselves. Fettered by such academic conventions, we approach light-heartedly the study of Indian art. It is not to be greatly wondered at that we often do not like it, and proceed from saying that it is not beautiful, to a further statement that it has no meaning.

But the fact that modern European art is mainly imitative, and so has no definite meaning of its own, ought not to blind us to the truth that taken as a whole, art is as much a means of expression, as much a language, as behaviour in general; both when sincere express the character and the preoccupations of the individual or race to which they belong. We are now accustomed to express thoughts and feelings mainly by means of spoken or written symbols. But a race of beings is quite easily conceivable, whose principal or only language should be another art, such as music, gesture, or painting, and there is no reason whatever every such language should not be at least as complex and full of resource for the expression of both concrete and abstract ideas as speech itself. There are some always amongst us for whom this is true: "to the true musician, music is more intelligible than speech...it is the art of thinking in sounds." Mendelssohn said that "any piece of music that he loved expressed thoughts not too indefinite to be put into words, but too definite." Mozart declared that he could not express his feelings and thoughts in poetry

or painting, but that he could in music, for, "I am a musician."

In exactly the same way, for the plastic artist, painting or sculpture are languages by which he expresses and understands thoughts which are not in any sense vague, but which cannot be equally well, at least by him, expressed by means of words. "To give a clothing, a perfect form to one's thought, is to be an artist." It is immaterial whether the clothing be of words, or forms, or colors or sounds.

But just as the majority of persons do not understand more than the very elements of the language of music, so the majority do not understand more than the very elements of the language of form and colour. Further, it is possible to understand a familiar dialect of such a language, and not to understand a dialect that is unfamiliar.

This last is the position of even the best qualified European writers upon Indian art.

How should the unfamiliar dialect be approached by one who proposes to interpret it to others? One method would be to examine the interpretation put upon its phrases by living or departed members of the same race, whose whole mental atmosphere and traditional culture are identical with or similar to those of the artists to be studied. The character of modern English education in India has, however, been such as to de-Indianize the minds of those who might otherwise have been able to comment in English upon Indian art as envisaged by a really Indian mind: and on the other hand, so far as

I am aware, some extraordinary oversight has prevented any European writer from seeking assistance in Sanskrit writings on the theory of aesthetics, or even in a study of the Silpa sastras. One would have supposed that these would have been made at least the foundation of a study of the theory and development of Indian art.

Failing these direct aids to the understanding of Indian art, which art, be it remembered, is essentially religious in content,—*i. e.*, not necessarily dogmatic, but always concerned with realities,—it would seem most natural to so study the life and thought of India, especially in its religious aspects, as to make it possible to see the world to some extent through Indian eyes, and so to gradually understand the expression of the Indian genius in Indian art.

In studying the art of any country, it is surely no more reasonable to ignore its meaning, which for creator and contemporary spectator was its most important quality, than it would be to consider the sound only, and not the meaning, in studying the work of any poet writing in an unknown language. Yet it is sometimes suggested that no qualification of knowledge of and sympathy for Indian mysticism and ideals of life and character is needed for the study of Indian art: that it is sufficient for the student, lacking these qualifications, to know only whether he 'likes' or 'dislikes' a given example of Brahmanical or Buddhist art: that such art has no connection with Indian idealistic thought, and

that those who trace such a connection are themselves reading the Upanishads into the paintings and sculptures.

Is not the opposite view more true, that the understanding of Indian art can only be attained through a realisation of the mental atmosphere in which it grew? One might illustrate from many European and Indian parallels. Take, for instance, the case of Gothic, an art closely related in spirit to Indian, and equally foreign to the modern temper. "To account for Gothic", writes Professor Lethaby in his book on 'Mediæval Art', "we have to account for its historic basis and for the whole atmosphere of mysticism, chivalry and work-enthusiasm, with all the institutions, monastic, romantic and social, which formed its environment." A hundred years ago Gothic art was almost universally condemned as barbaric, in words very similar to those often applied to Indian art at the present day: it is possible now for authorities like the late Professor Middleton to write that in the thirteenth century, "it reached a higher pitch of perfection, aesthetic and technical, than has been obtained by any other country in the world." This may or may not be true: it may or may not also come to pass that Indian art of certain periods will be recognized as of supreme value; but it is certain that a new understanding of Indian art has somehow or other to be gained, and equally certain that this can only come through an understanding of the consciousness that finds expression in it. To take an Indian parallel: the late Professor G. U. Pope, in discussing his translation of the Tiruvachagam, says that

his experience had taught him "that to get even a glimpse of the thought of a real poet, the student must often go down into the depths, must use every means to put himself in sympathy with his author, must learn to think and feel with him, and so-it may be-at last-come to understand him." It is the same with painting and sculpture, which are only other kinds of poetry; we must learn to think and feel as the artist thought and felt, if we would understand his art. If what he thought and felt repels, or even does not interest us, it follows that the interpretation of his art is not our real calling. No books are more completely valueless than those written about art by persons who lack emotional experience kindred to the artist's own. That is no reason why an European should not understand Indian art: for all great art deals with universal experiences, it is only that unfamiliarity of form sometimes blinds us to a real identity of passion. What is to be deplored is that books on Indian art have generally been written by persons who do not realise that art is an emotional experience at all. Leonardo di Vinci's illuminating phrase is an universal standard of criticism of works of art: "That drawing is best, which by its action best expresses the passion that animates the figure." This is of course applicable to any art whether music, painting or sculpture, if we understand drawing in a general sense of organised delineation. Its truth is self-evident and cuts away the ground from all criticism based on obvious external

qualities of resemblance or so called perfection of form.

But what if you not only cannot feel, but openly regard it as superfluous to investigate, the passion that animates a work of art which you propose to study? One might well prefer the opposite extreme, and say with Blake, that "Enthusiastic admiration is the first principle of knowledge, and its last."

The function of the art critic and historian is after all a humble one: he is the servant of artists and his glory lies in perfection of service, and not in an exhibition of superior knowledge. His power too is limited; he can but lead those for whom he writes, to the waters of life,—he cannot make them drink. This they must do of their own free will, and this they can only do if they have suffered thirst. No pilgrim reaching a sacred spot desires the kind of information supplied in guide books: he wills to see the God, as we say in India, *dhulo payedarsan*, to worship with dusty feet. Worse than useless is the guide who takes his money and sends him empty away. Worse than useless, likewise, is the art critic whose sole concern is with dates and names and schools.

To take some concrete cases: the work of Professor Grunwedel ("Buddhist Art in India"), for all its mass of valuable facts, contains no attempt even at a constructive account of the 'nature of Indian,' nor any sign of an endeavour to explain the ideals and development of art that is distinctively Buddhist. Foucher's pre-occupation,

again, with the details of European influence at a period when Europe had little to bestow in the way of artistic inspiration, would be comprehensible enough if the real character of the results were admitted. But when works of this kind are put forward as histories of *Indian art* they can only be described as futile and unscientific, if not as specious frauds. The same applies to the work of writers like Mr. Vincent Smith, who starts by saying that "after 300 A. D., Indian sculpture properly so-called hardly deserves to be reckoned as art." Those who write, and often with discernment and illumination, on archaeology or anthropology pure and simple, have no right to confuse issues by describing their books as works treating of art.

What then should be the aim of the writer of the history of the art of a given country or a given period? The prevailing idea indeed seems to be that that the proper thing to do is to enquire how far it, at any time, approximates to the art of some other country or period which the writer understands and approves of; to seek for and enlarge upon any traces of the influence of this approved style upon the style of the country or period investigated, and to condemn the remainder as barbaric. We are in fact reminded of the saying: "only works which are done in Italy can be called true painting, and therefore we call good painting Italian."

Surely, the man who elects to describe and record the history of any art must set other and less banal aims than these before him. He must so put the matter before

the student, that he is helped over initial difficulties of comprehension, and finally appreciates the unknown art better than he did before ; otherwise what end is served by writing or by reading what is written ? I think there is no one quite great enough to say that this or that art is highest or best, and another second or third : nor is the art critic or historian called upon to deliver any judgment, of this kind. He needs only to be able to recognize truth and life when he sees them. All good art has similar qualities, and so also, all bad art is bad in much the same way. But every great cycle of artistic expression has certain characteristics and a particular genius of its own, and expresses certain preoccupations. If the critic's work is to be of any value he must so understand this genius as to be able to trace the evolution of its expression, to define the period of its fullest development, to point to the examples in which its bias is most perfectly expressed, and above all to correlate its form with the movement of the human spirit that finds expression through it.

The conviction is sometimes forced upon the student, that European writers on Indian art have been, what in Mr. Vincent Smith's opinion, the inhabitants of Hindustan have always been, "singularly indifferent to æsthetic merit, and little qualified to distinguish between good and bad art." The convincing proof of this is to be found in the illustrations, varying in degree of inadequacy, which disgrace the pages of English, French and German handbooks to Indian art. The matter is well

put by Gustave de Bon, (quoted by Maindron, himself one of the worst offenders!):—

“ It is not from the cuts or bad lithographs which appear in certain works on Hindu Mythology that one can form any idea of the sculpture. It really seems as if the authors of these works had made a point of selecting the most wretched examples. It is owing to these unfortunate reproductions that there has been formed the opinion now prevalent in Europe, that Hindu sculpture is a quite inferior art.”

We should know what to think of an oriental art critic who judged all European art on the basis of a collection of tradesmen's oleographs, and modern Roman Catholic plaster saints, or, still worse, from the standpoint of religious prejudice. This is however, practically, what European writers have done with Indian art. As the French writer already mentioned remarks, Hindu art “ has been judged by most writers with injustice, for which the only excuse appears to be its extraordinary naivete, when it is not the result of a pious bigotry as exaggerated as that of the conquering Musulmans.”

The Indian collections to be seen in European museums, especially in London, are open to similar criticism. Their miscellaneous contents never seem to be determined by expert selection.

It is perfectly useless to approach an art like Indian, armed with conventional ideas about idolatry, superstition, polytheism, priestcraft, and the like. All these things flourished exceedingly in the noblest

centuries of Christian art. Every time and place has its own illusions and superstitions. The modern superstition is the superstition of facts, which is a very much more dangerous thing than any superstition of the imagination. The extremely materialistic character of most European religious thought since the Reformation has made it almost impossible for European writers to interpret the art of a people who regard a belief in the reality of phenomena as in itself the worst sort of superstition. Since the Renaissance moreover, all ideas of 'Gods' have been coloured by the patriarchal types of the Greek Olympus; it is only just beginning to be realised that these 'beautiful humanities' were not in any profound sense religious conceptions; the true Greek religion (which was gradually overwhelmed by materialistic thought) was something quite different, more passionate, mystic, remote and very much more like the religions of the East. The Indian Gods have so far been studied by missionaries and anthropologists, instead of by philosophers and artists. But it is only when students of Indian art understand exactly what the idea of a God, or any particular God, stands for in the Indian mind and heart, that a sane criticism of Indian art can be made. The mythologies so far written are useless from this point of view.

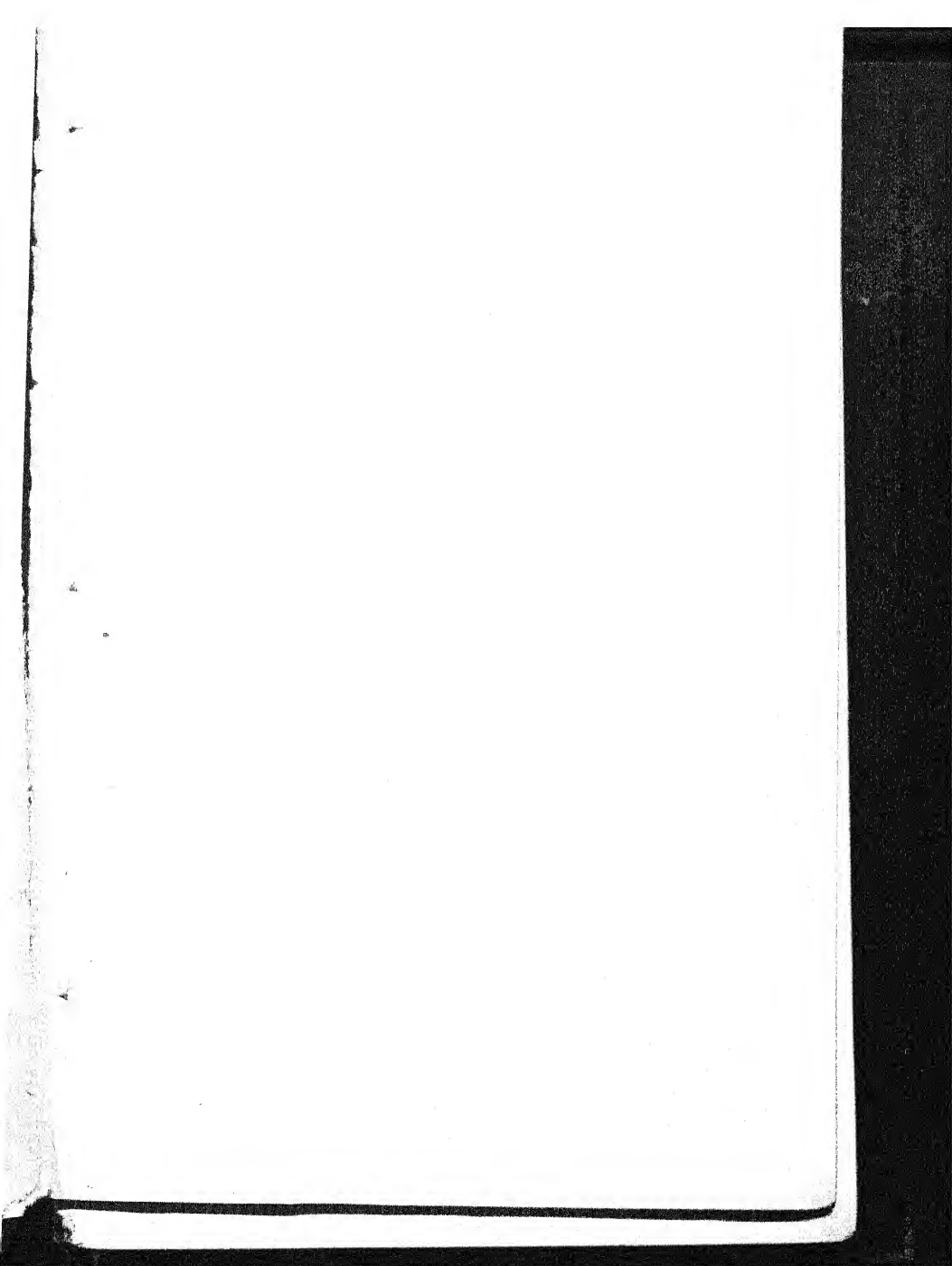
Perhaps the greatest obstacle to the scientific study of Indian art lies in the modern conception of art as essentially imitative, and that general confusion of the aims of science and art which is exemplified in 'photographic

criticism.' Oriental art as a whole does not aim at the reproduction of the facts of nature, objectively considered; its aim is suggestion, selection, emphasis, design—the representation, not of objective but of subjective fact. It is therefore perfectly futile to complain that Indian does not represent the so-called facts of nature: it expresses the realities of life, and it would mould the facts of nature nearer to the heart's desire. The greatest art is creative and living; it is in its faithfulness to this ideal that there lies the significance of Oriental art for Western students as a recent writer and critic remarks. The greatest practical value of Eastern art for us lies in the fact "that those essential principles, which in our thirst for verisimilitude, we have overlaid, have been upheld with far greater constancy by the artists of the East."

It is a tragic thing, however, that in spite of all difficulties, some Western minds in modern times have understood Indian art, and been more deeply moved by it, than any Indian. Not one of us in all the nineteenth century thought of writing any book on Indian art, even as good as those European books that I have criticised. Even to-day it is far easier to lecture to an ordinary European audience on Indian art, and find some understanding of it, than it is to secure this understanding from an Indian audience. In all other civilised countries while the general public remains indifferent to good art, there are small groups of persons who can feel the passion of, and care for any good art. In India, not only is the good part of Indian art quite ignored, but 'educated' men are

capable of understanding only the commonest academic art of Europe, and care nothing for the real masters of painting and sculpture. What a commentary on the worthlessness of a century of so-called 'English education' !

Suppose that at first we, whether European or Indian, do not understand or care for Indian art : let us at least avoid the thought that it is given to us alone to know what are beauty and truth. We must realise that other men besides ourselves have sought their images, and sought them not as we now seek, outside ourselves, but in their own hearts. These men lived in a world which we now know less than the antarctic or the frozen north : a world perhaps more real, more wonderful than ours, certainly quite different. Only because we do not know it have we called it unreal : but until we know it as we know our own how may we say whether or no they painted images of truth ? At least we should give thanks to them for showing to us that our world is no absolute *Ding an sich*, and that the shadows of reality are of many varied outlines and move across our vision with mysterious elusiveness. Perhaps the greatest end of any art is to show to us that no one shadow is eternal or self-existent, only Light is that.



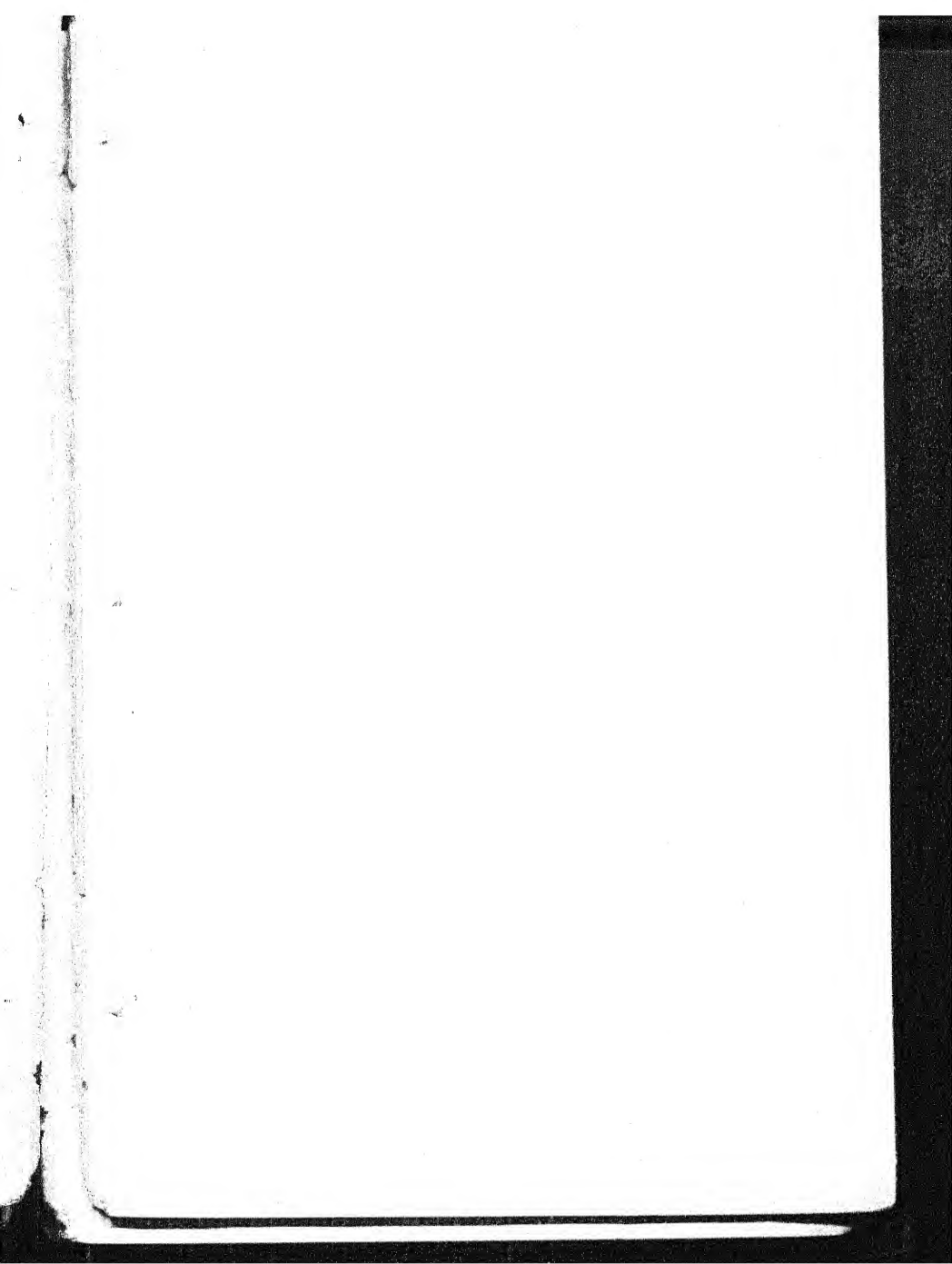


BUDDHA, CEYLON



a Buddha or an Isvara, for it is only by self-conquest that the status of a god is ever attained.

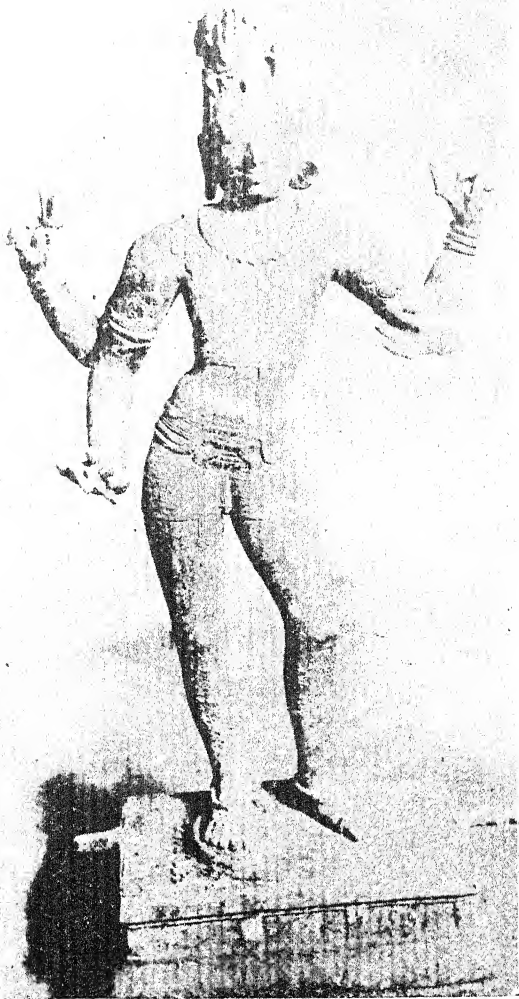
The whole ideal might be summed up in the words of Eckhardt:—"Real sanctification consists in this, that the spirit remains immovable and unaffected by all import of love or hate, joy, or sorrow, honor or shame, as a huge mountain is unstirred by a gentle breeze. This immovable sanctification causes man to attain the nearest likeness to God he is capable of." The images of Buddha, of Avalokitesvara, of Vishnu, Siva, in their sattvic aspects were intended to represent the nearest likeness to God that art could reach. Now expression, as Herbert Spencer puts it, is feature in the making. All those variations of feature constituting what we call expression represent departures, from a perfect type. A religious art which aims at representing a superhuman perfection of character, equanimity, in the sense above indicated, can have nothing to do with facial expression in the ordinary sense; the more, 'human' in expression, the less does Hindu sculpture approach its own perfection. That is to say, there is no room in this sort of art for the representation of individual characteristics, for portraiture. Such qualities as nobility, peace, graciousness, which involve in their perfection a superhuman balance of intellect and emotion, can alone be rightly 'expressed' in a symbol (idol) of Divine Life. It is these qualities which in fact do find expression in the faces of such images as



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The whole ideal might be summed up in the words of Eekhardt :—" Real sanctification consists in this, that the spirit remains immovable and unaffected by all import of love or hate, joy, or sorrow, honor or shame, as a huge mountain is unstirred by a gentle breeze. This immovable sanctification causes man to attain the nearest likeness to God he is capable of." The images of Buddha, of Avalokitesvara, of Vishnu, Siva, in their sattvic aspects were intended to represent the nearest likeness to God that art could reach. Now expression, as Herbert Spencer puts it, is feature in the making. All those variations of feature constituting what we call expression represent departures, from a perfect type. A religious art which aims at representing a superhuman perfection of character, equanimity, in the sense above indicated, can have nothing to do with facial expression in the ordinary sense; the more, 'human' in expression, the less does Hindu sculpture approach its own perfection. That is to say, there is no room in this sort of art for the representation of individual characteristics, for portraiture. Such qualities as nobility, peace, graciousness, which involve in their perfection a superhuman balance of intellect and emotion, can alone be rightly 'expressed' in a symbol (idol) of Divine Life. It is these qualities which in fact do find expression in the faces of such images as





SIVA, TANJORE

THE HISTORY OF THE

REIGN OF

CHARLES THE FIRST

BY

JOHN BURNET

OF

THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

IN TWO VOLUMES

LONDON

Printed by J. Sturges, at the

PRINTERS, in the Strand

1724

By Authority

Printed by J. Sturges, at the

PRINTERS, in the Strand

1724

By Authority

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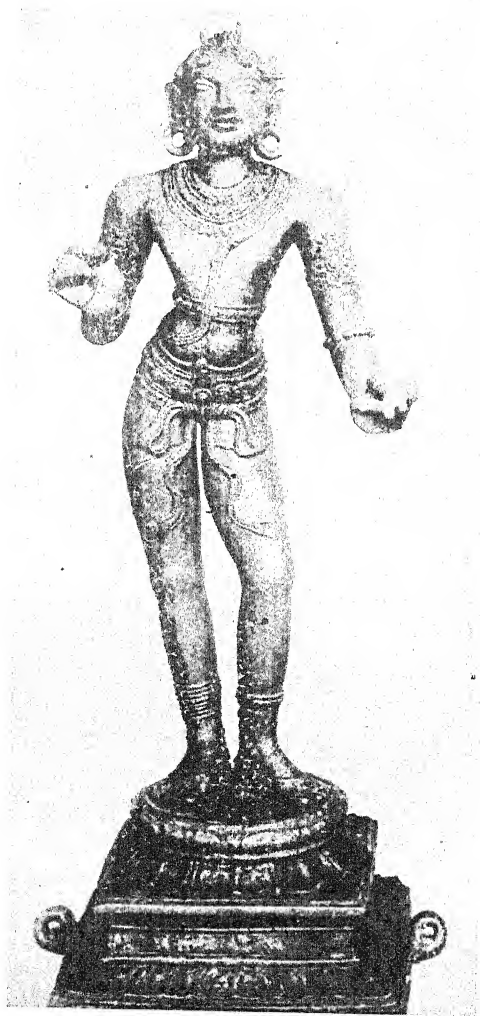
the great Ceylon Buddha, Pl. II, or the Tanjore Ganga-dhara (Pl. III).

The ideal which informs the most universally accepted Indian Gospel, is that of action without attachment. This view of life, thus expressed in words, is equally clearly stated in sculpture or painting representing human or divine beings engaged in strenuous action, but having at the same time upon the face an expression of unshaken peace. This peace may be equally expressed in a destroying Dharmapala, in an embracing Purusha and Prakriti, and in a meditating Buddha. Everywhere the Indian images seem to express, perhaps unconsciously, the idea that in all work it is but 'this body' that acts, while the self, serene, unshaken and unattached, is but a spectator of the drama where itself is manifested as an actor.

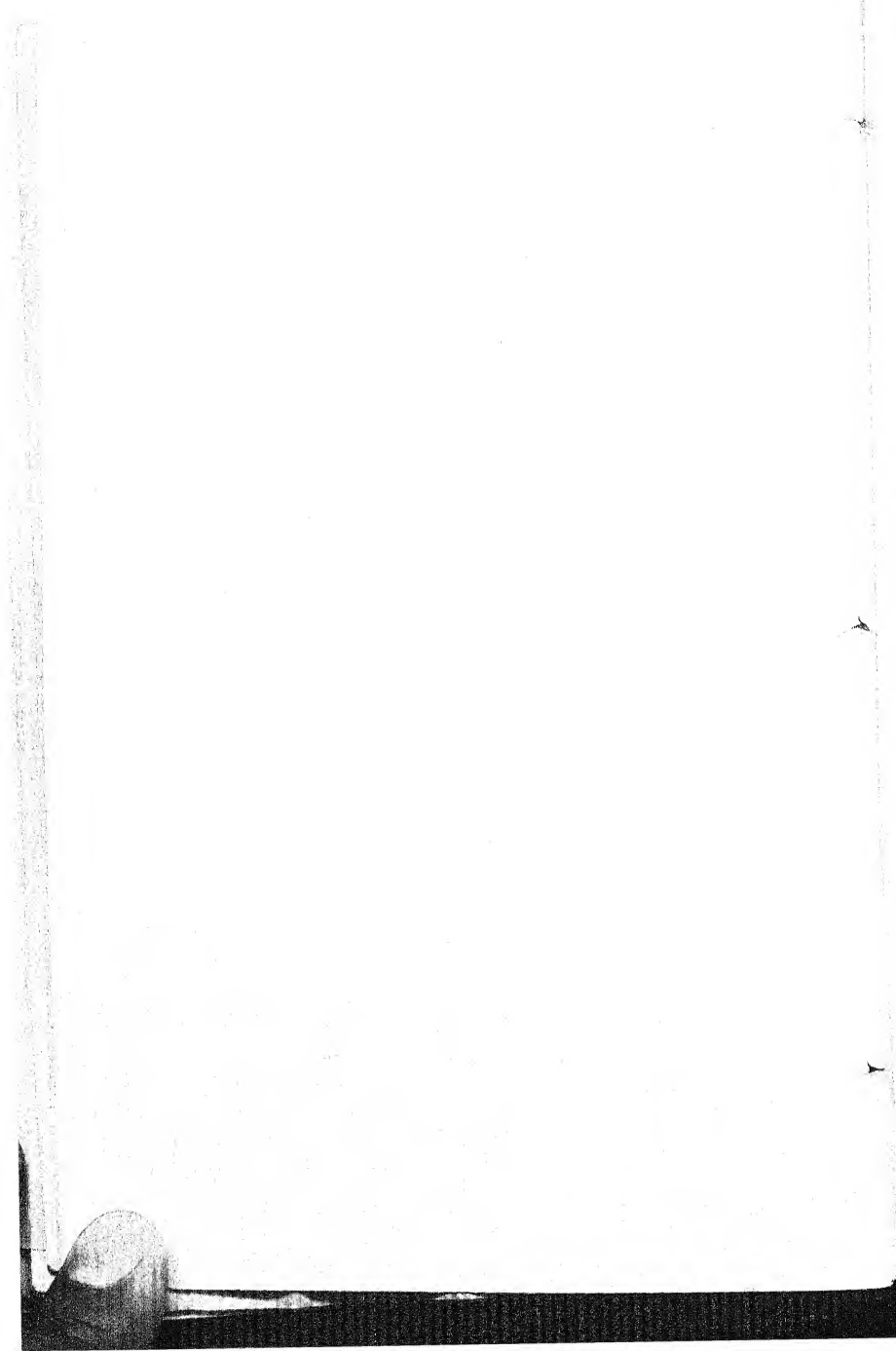
Even the divine ideal has its basis in humanity: one may see to-day everywhere surviving in India the mountainous, silent human forms, the features immovably composed, and the indescribable stillness which belongs to Indian sculpture: one may see on the ghats of any tirtham the lion waist and slender limbs of types that might otherwise seem to have been carefully exaggerated by the artist: and as Lafcadio Hearn so beautifully tells us, the gentle mysterious smile of so many Buddhist images is the very same that is natural to peoples for whom the subjective life is very real. These significant things emphasised by art, have grown into an ideal and a tradition which have reacted powerfully on life itself, and find expression

almost as much in images of saints or kings as in the figures of gods. The divine ideal gives to these a certain strange and beautiful impersonality that makes them like the gods whose servants, or, as some would say, incarnate selves they partly were. Yet in the face and gesture of a figure like the Ceylon Sundaramurti Swami (Pl. IV) we find a real humanity: he is a boy, and not a god. If we contrast this with the strange un-humanness of expression, the remoteness and repose of contemporary figures of Siva himself, we shall realise that it was not because the Indian sculptor could not represent character, but because we have not always understood the kind of character that he wished to represent, that his work has seemed monstrous and expressionless.

In another way, moreover, Indian sculpture is extraordinarily expressive. This is in its representation of gesture. "A good painter," says Leonardo, "has two chief objects to paint, namely, man, and the intention of his soul. The first is easy, and the second difficult, because he has to represent it through the attitudes and movements of the limbs." It is here that Indian sculpture excels all other in the world. Even Egyptian though it has the wonderful stillness, has not the impassioned movement of Indian. In such an image as the Sundaramurti Swami from Ceylon, there is a sense of breathless eagerness and rapturous surprise that give it a quite peculiar beauty; equally impressive are the passion of repose in a Dhyanī Buddha, and the sense of whirlwind movement in a Dharmapala. In



SUNDARA MURTI SWAMI, CEYLON



Europe we are too apt to think of human beings as faces only, and to think of the body as a mere accessory. Even the hands we do not notice. But for the sculptor a man is not a face : he is like a mountain or a cathedral, a single unity of which the face is only a part.

This essentially sculptural quality is everywhere conspicuous in Indian art. Perhaps it may serve as a compensation to those who regret a lack of humanism in the Indian ideal of facial expression. In any case, whether we demand of art merely the reflection of ourselves, or the vision of something beyond us, it is certain that we must understand and recognise, if not accept, the Indian (Hindu or Buddhist) ideal of character, and we must know something of the extent to which this character has been actually realised in life. The complaint of lack of expression in Indian art is due either to lack of acquaintance with the finest work, or of a failure to comprehend the kind of expression arrived at.

ON MUGHAL AND RAJPUT PAINTING*

After the first great period of Indian painting, of which the painted chaityas at Ajanta are witness still, we have to face an almost entire absence of actual remains, until we reach the middle of the sixteenth century. We know, of course, from literary references and other indications, that the art was continuous. But no mediæval wall paintings are preserved, though a few Buddhist painted book covers are found.

It may be remarked that there are three reasonable ways of using painting, other than the merely decorative ornamentation of the smaller articles of industrial or cultural value. The noblest of these ways is that art of wall painting in which the Italians and the Ajanta artists alike excelled. There is then the Japanese method of painting pictures on cloth, pictures that are carefully put away, and only taken out one by one and hung singly in a room, otherwise almost bare of furniture or decoration : the room is filled by, and dominated by a single picture, which the spectator can appreciate without distraction or disturbance. Thirdly we have portfolio paintings, which form a unity in themselves apart from any direct relation to an architectural environment.

*Originally delivered as a lecture to the Indian Society of Oriental art, Calcutta, 1910.

To this last class belong most of the Indian paintings (with a few exceptions of paintings on the walls of palaces) of the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. There are also various book illustrations, illuminations, but this is more characteristic of Persian than of Indian art. The Indian portfolio paintings are not to be dismissed as decorative art: indeed, inasmuch as they are entirely independent of environment, no kind of painting could be less accurately defined as 'decorative' in a depreciatory sense. They are most varied in treatment and the range of subject matter is equally great. They reflect both the life and the ideals of men with extraordinary intimacy,—the actual and the dream-world of two great Oriental cultures at the most dramatic moment of their contact.

Indian portfolio pictures are not a branch of Persian art nor an importation of the Mughals. Only certain elements in this art are Persian and Mughal (*i. e.*, Turki or Mongolian). Persian art is essentially one of book illustrations in which brilliant colours and much gold are used. It has small variety of content. Fighting, drinking and flirtation are the usual motifs. Other elements—such as portraiture (where it occurs)—are due, as in India, to Timurid (Mughal) influence. Persian painting is pretty, even beautiful, it is graceful, lyrical, exquisite in colouring and design, but it is never passionate. It tells us of magnificent adventures and of scented gardens, not of the love of God or the infinite joy and sorrow of the loves of women or men. It does not



YOGIS

Illustration to Persian translation of the Yoga Vashtishta

seventeenth century*—before that, it is developing; after, it is declining. In the seventeenth century the vigorous Central Asian (i. e., Mongol or Timurid) influence predominates over the more effeminate Persian element and both combine with the art of the country itself to form a self-complete and exquisite new art which attains its zenith in the reigns of Jahangir and Shah Jahan.

This art is ~~similar~~ and dramatic in its content, excelling most in portraiture. Its outlook is essentially upon the present moment, it is deeply interested in the doings of aristocratic men—it is not an idealisation of life, but a representation of it. In other words, the most characteristic features of Mughal painting are its profound interest in individual character, its analytic rather than synthetic method and its concern with the doings of kings and courtiers, rather than with the visions of saints or the lyric symbolism of an agricultural race.

The Mughal style of painting, though built up with the materials of many different traditions, is most undeniably original, in the same sense that the Mughal culture in India is as a whole original. It is true that it combines Persian, Indian and other elements: but out of these it creates something new. The mind of the age, essentially synthetic, and not merely eclectic, finds its truest expression in the character of such a man as Akbar. This type of cultivated mind, now only too rare, nourished alike by the streams of Persian and Indian religious thought, romance, and art, is as truly original as

* The best Mughal work of the 16th century is the most Persian, of the 17th century, the most Indian.

can well be looked for. In Akbar it was combined with great personal genius, which found full expression, because it was not opposed to the spirit of his age, but embodied in itself the highest ideals and more or less unconscious tendencies of that age, developed to their fullest extent.

It is the same with Mughal architecture—it is a new architecture which combines two completely different styles to produce what has been called an improved third style; (1) 'entirely original.' (2)

At the same time it must be recognized that the true Mughal painting was not fully evolved in the time of Akbar himself. He was not perhaps a very good judge of art. At any rate very few of his own painters produced work of real importance, because they were too much employed in imitating Persian mannerisms. But this condition did not last—after 1600, the new style disengages itself from these restrictions with extreme rapidity.

The Mughal schools of painting in India cover a period of barely two centuries, during which the art grows up, flourishes and declines. Unlike the Rajput styles, it owes very much to foreign sources. The most important of these foreign elements is that of the schools of Turkestan (Bokhara and Samarkand), the home of the Timurids, who became the "Great Mughals" of India. These Timurids were great patrons of literature and art. In Babar's memoirs we find in the midst of accounts of adventures and campaigns, delightfully simple

(1) A. Muller, 'Der Islam in Morgen und Abendland' II, 386.

(2) Von Garbe, Akbar, Emperor of India, p. 25.

references to flowers and painters. Akbar's patronage of painters is too well known to need description here. But of all these Kings Shah Jahan was the greatest artist. He himself was an expert calligrapher: and in his reign or just before Mughal painting and architecture reached their zenith, and exhibited that combination of grandeur with feminine elegance of detail, which characterises, for example, the great Fort at Agra.

Akbar seems at first to have employed a number of Hindu artists to copy illuminated pictures in the Persian Shah Namahs and similar works. These book illustrations, in what may be called the bastard Persian style, have singularly little interest, or value. We find however, by the close of Akbar's reign, a truly 'mixed,' school in existence, which though it soon gave place to a more completely Indian style, produced some exceedingly beautiful and interesting works. The Persian influence appears in the scenery and in some details of the drawing, and also in the fact that this Indo-Persian or early Mughal art is mainly one of book illustration.

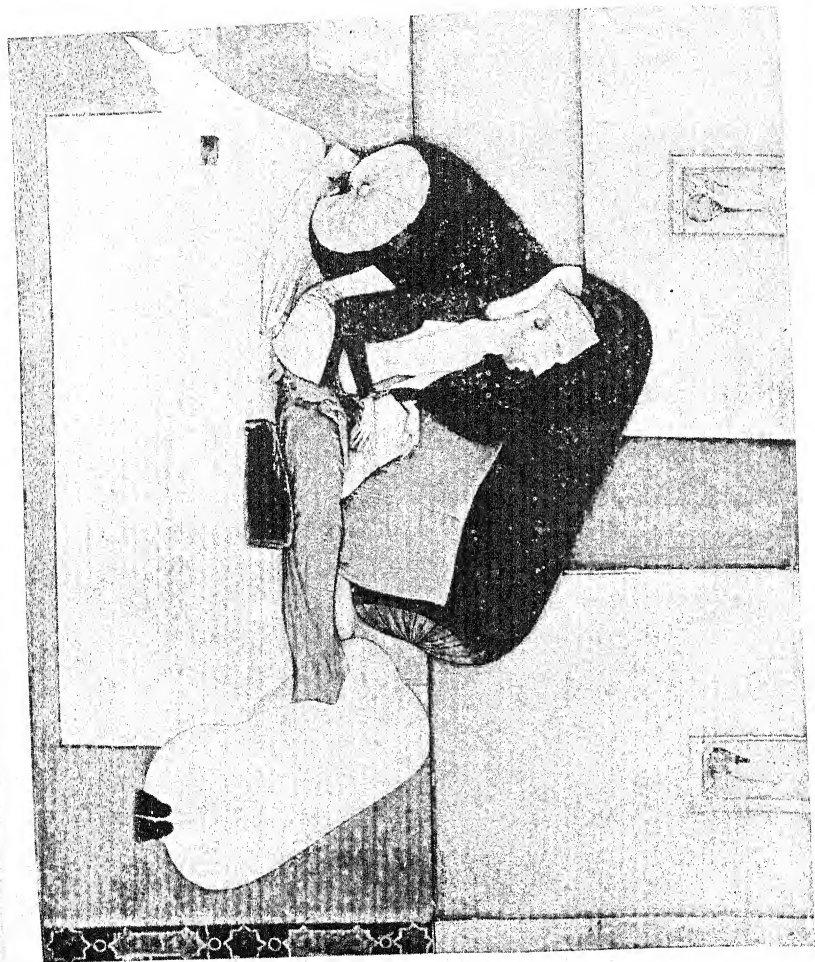
Certain Indian books (such as the Yoga Vasishta) translated into Persian for the benefit of Akbar himself and others like him unfamiliar with Sanskrit gave to the Indian painters the opportunity for self-expression which the imitation of Persian pictures denied to them. In such books we find illustrations wholly Hindu in sentiment and subject matter, and exceedingly accomplished in execution, although the landscape is altogether artificial (Pl. V).

Portraiture, however, is the essentially Mughal contribution to Indian art, though it is not wholly unknown to the painters of the Rajput schools. This factor is rather due to Central Asian than to Persian influence. In Central Asian art, Chinese influence is very marked, and it is interesting to reflect that the debt which China owed to India from so long ago, for her Buddhist art, she partly repaid through the hands of the later Mughal ('Monghol') invaders.

The Mughals themselves originated near Samarcand in Turkistan where a remarkable school of draughtsmanship, largely based on Chinese tradition, had long flourished. Its characteristics are exemplified in the magnificent portrait of Tamerlane in the Bodleian and by such drawings as the 'Running Warrior,' in the collection of Mr. Golonbeff. Communication between Samarcand and India was long maintained, and we cannot doubt that, as Mr. Migeon remarks, 'the Moguls of Delhi continued to import those gaily illuminated books from Turkistan.' Moreover we have, in some signed portraits preserved in the British Museum, definite proof that artists from Turkistan worked at the Mughal Courts in India in the seventeenth century. A number of these are the work of 'Muhammad Nadir of Samarcand.'

It was, I believe, this art which gave the characteristic impulse to portraiture, to Mughal art in India. This was no small matter, for, as Mr. Vincent Smith remarks, India possesses, for the period of two centuries under





THE DYING MAN

Mughal Miniature in the Bodleian, Oxford



RAJPUT DRAWING FROM JAIPUR BODLEIAN, OXFORD

The Rajput paintings geographically considered, fall into two related groups, the Himalayan (or 'Pahari') schools and the schools of Rajputana. The Hindu painting of southern India is of a different character: it may fairly be called decadent and is almost exclusively mythological. The Himalayan style is most typically represented by the peculiar Kangra Valley type, those of the plains by the artists of Jaipur. It is, at least, in the Kangra Valley and Jaipur that the old traditions have longest survived.

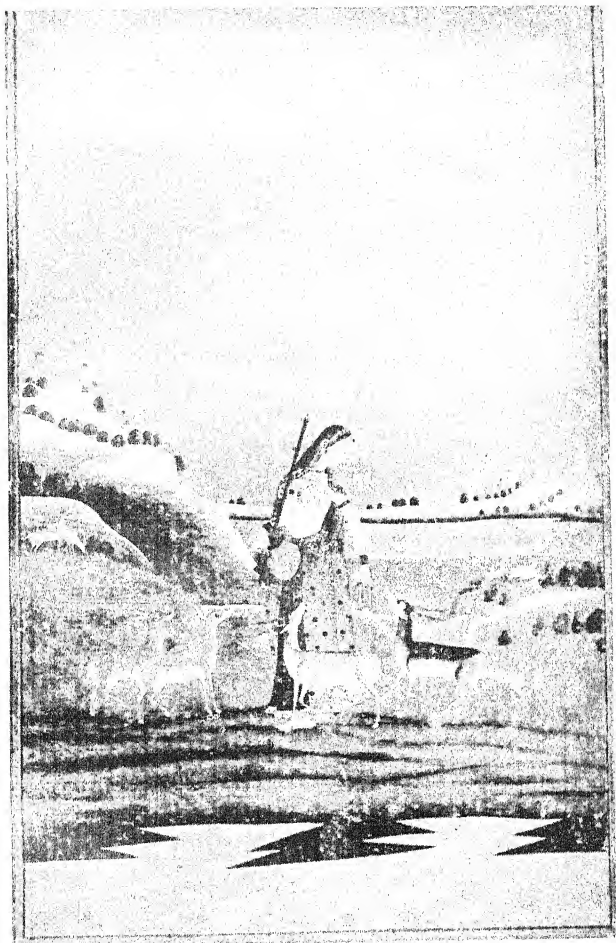
The strength of the Kangra school lies in the Vaishnava paintings, with their burden of love and their lyric humanistic symbolism. They tell of Rama's wandering in the forest: we see Him with Sita, guarded by Lakshmana. We see the bears and monkeys building Rama's bridge and storming the citadel of Lanka, and these things live for us as never before, because we are made not merely aware of them but made to feel them. The pictures reveal to us the life of Krishna as a child, as a boy and as hero. All love human and divine (for India these are one and the same) are told of in the herd-girls' adoration of him. This Vaishnava art is an idealisation of love in every phase of its expression, a very consecration of humanity. Animals are in the bond; and as it is written in the Ramayana, the trees themselves bend towards the Lord as He passes.

The Kangra drawings excel in the representation of movement and expressive gesture. The painters were 'curious of certain movements of tenderness and ardour' of which their expression is most passionate. The meeting

of eyes, the locking of hand in hand, the grace and shyness of women, their adoration for men, the abandoned sadness of desertion or vain desire are rendered with exquisite purity of sentiment. Again, the hosts of heaven are led by Durga against the powers of evil—she is old and ugly and sword in hand rides on a lion, breathing flames that consume the asuras; or as a naked woman on an open plain she is the guru of an assembly of sages; or as an exquisite young girl, as Parvati, she sits by Siva, stringing for him the heads of a thousand Brahmas as a garland (for she is the destroyer of Time).

Nor does the value of this art depend solely on its subject matter—its wonderful idealisation of pastoral life or its daring contrast of the forces of good and evil, denial and desire—or upon the fact that it speaks a language of the folk, the mother tongue of all those who love the Bhagavata, the Adorable. For the way in which these things are told of is nearly always intrinsically lovely, or powerful, or amusing. Its productions range in manner from extreme refinement to extreme crudity, but they are never vulgar and very rarely without interest. Some of the purely mythological work however has little in it but a sort of rather arid symbolism, not beautifully expressed.

The pictures of the Jaipur school are somewhat harder and less accomplished than those of Kangra. But amongst them are some of exquisite perfection. Of the Rags and Raginis, personified musical modes, there are particularly fine examples. There is also some admirable



RAGINI TORI

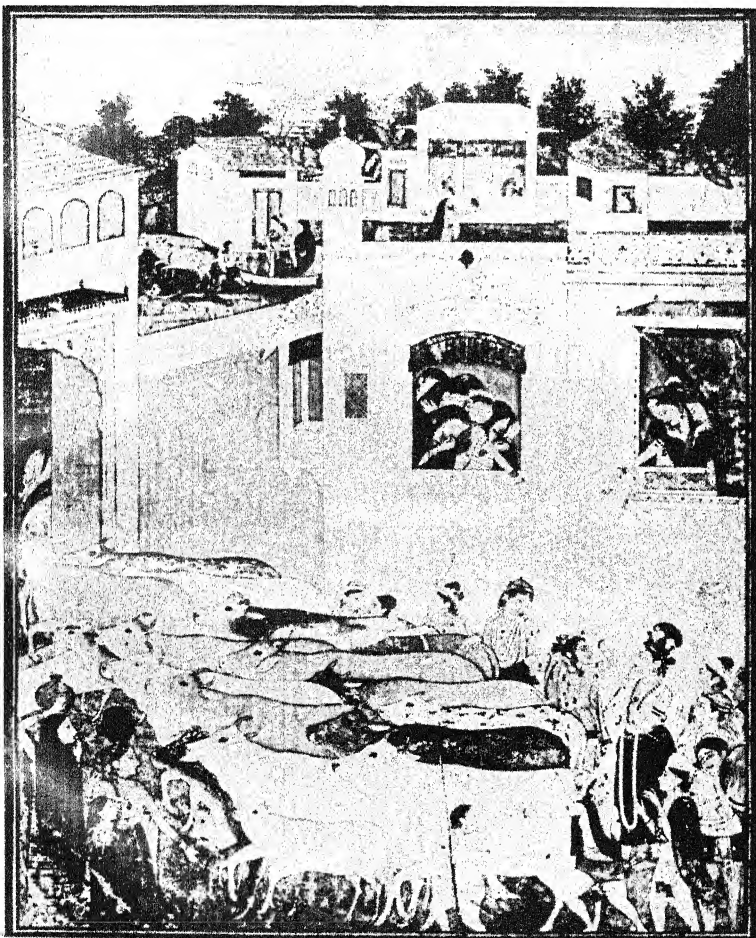
Rajput picture from Jaipur

peaks of the Himalayas are constantly represented. Persian influence when present is always apparent in the artificiality of the landscape—ultimately derivable from the Chinese mountain convention. The trees represented are always Indian, most often the mango. We never meet with the flowering shrubs and wind blown cypress of Persian art. The larger trees are often, especially in Kangra work, wreathed with flowering *lianes*. The angular margins of lakes and ponds are very characteristic : we do not find those little streams meandering through flowery meadows that adorn the pages of Persian books. The costume of men and women is almost purely Indian. There can be no doubt that foreign influence on costume and architecture was extensive and early : but this does not of course make the style of drawing foreign in any sense. The 3-pointed crown, each point with a ball, is a very characteristic Hindu element ; and the *dupata* and bodice (with bare waist) used by women. Of subject-matter I have already spoken. In Mughal work of the seventeenth century there is not a little contemporary Italian influence. But if we consider the Indian work as a whole, especially Rajput, what most impresses us is its kinship with earlier, pre-Raphaelite Italian painting. We are constantly reminded of Giotto, Benozzo Gozzoli, Botticelli, Francesco Francia and the earlier Italian wood-cutters. We find expressed in both arts the same childlike purity of soul, the same gentle wonder at the beauty of flowers and animals, the same mysterious sweet serenity in the faces of

women, the same worship of humanity as a symbol of the divine. And this is due not to borrowing, but to similarity of impulse. For the human spirit is not so constructed that it can borrow a nobility of expression without possessing that nobility within itself.

For all its charm, however, this art has definite limitations. It is no longer developing and as has been already pointed out, often needs some faculty of imaginative reconstruction in the spectator. It can have no appeal to those who are not attuned to its spirit of devotion and tenderness, or cannot accept its magnificent but uncompromising conventions. It is essentially true to human nature, but it makes no pretence to realism. It is the exact counterpart of the contemporary Indian poetry, and this is as it should be, for all true painting is a sort of poetry. It belongs to a time when the fantastic notion of representation as the highest aim of art had not been imagined in the East: it is purely expressive, and whether great or humble, it keeps its hold for ever on those who have ever felt its spell and who find in it the only visible record of a world of wonder and beauty that is passing away before our very eyes, unrecognized and unregretted.

Such are the chief characteristics of painting of the Rajput school. If it is ever possible to write in full the history of painting in India it is this art of the country itself, which, after Ajanta, must form its main theme. Compared with the significance of this religious art, so romantic and impassioned, even, in some respects



THE DIVINE COWHERD
Rajput picture from Kongra

more brilliant achievements of the Persian, Central Asian and Indian painters at the Mughal courts must be treated as an episode.

That Mughal painting, however, showed that it was still possible to found a new art on the basis of the old traditions : foreign influences were, not perhaps easily, but at last effectually, assimilated, and the result was a new and great art, which, as I have tried to show, is truly original. Perhaps this possibility of assimilating foreign influences and creating a new art in which traditional elements still on the whole predominate may be taken as a hopeful sign for the future development of Indian painting. It is already along these lines that the latest movement tends

NIGHT EFFECTS IN INDIAN PICTURES

The representation of night effects is a very characteristic feature of Indian painting. It is true that in Persian illuminations we occasionally find night scenes depicted, when necessary to the illustration of the subject in hand, but in such paintings there is no representation of night effects: we gather only from the burning crossets and lighted candles that events are taking place at night. In Indian paintings we have all the romance and mystery of night itself, painted for its own sake. The night in India, almost more than the day, is the time of awakeness and of action; it is the time for discourse and entertainment, for travel, for worship and for love. It is a time of exquisite contrasts, when the torch of a guide or the flame of a camp fire lights up the traveller's face, or the crowded candles illuminate the gold-inwoven dress and tinkling jewels of the dancer. At night the water-fête is at its height, and one may see the gaily decorated barge of a great guild of craftsmen, or of a prince or Rajah, threading its way amongst the mass of smaller craft that crowd round the boats where music and dancing are going on, or provisions are for sale. At night the lover waits for her beloved. At night the gods are borne



RIDING AT NIGHT
(Collection of Mr. C. H. Read)

in procession round the temple ambulatory, with music and dance. And it is at night that men and women steal away to lonely hermitages to talk with those for whom the world is vanity, or go with offerings and devotion to some forest shrine of Mahadev. All this full life finds passionate expression in Indian painting.

The four pictures which illustrate the subject of this chapter need little explanation. The first, 'Riding at Night' represents, Baz Bahadur and Rupmati. (Pl. X) Baz Bahadur ruled over Malwa, 1554-1570, A.D. Rupmati was a Hindu poetess, famed throughout India for her beauty and learning. Their love is the theme of many songs. When Baz Bahadur, in 1570, was defeated by Akbar's General, Adham Khan, Rupmati took poison to escape him. The picture, or a variant of it in which the two are riding out by day to hawk, is represented in many collections. The example here given is one of two almost identical versions in the collection of Mr. C. H. Read.

Another picture (Pl. XI) shows three Hindu girls, two with fireworks, the third a servant, standing on a terrace, with a lake and low hills behind. The sweet serene faces and exquisite dresses, lit up by the 'golden rain,' stand out against the dark background of the night. Though not signed it is probably the work of the painter Muhammad Afzal, who flourished in the seventeenth century.

A third picture (Pl. XII) represents a princess, attended by two maid servants worshipping at a forest shrine of

Siva. In pictures of this type, the princess devotee is really Uma seeking by worship to recover the love of Siva given to her as Sati in a previous incarnation. The whole landscape speaks of Siva; the mountain side and the mysterious forest have a strange sense of consciousness. The central figure shines with the radiance which the painters of night effects knew so well how to suggest. These pictures recall the rendering of devotional concentration so characteristic of early Italian painting, with which their spiritual kinship is very near. Perhaps the latter owed much to oriental influences. It would be possible to illustrate many more examples of Indian night pictures, of subjects such as 'The Camp Fire,' 'Bhils Hunting,' 'Abhisharika'; one more must, however, suffice. (Pl. XIII) This, which has been called 'The Bride,' loses much in monochrome reproduction, especially as regards the pure gold overdress of the nearest figure. The picture is of most delicate and romantic loveliness and purity. There is a haunting charm in the gentle shyness of the bride as she is led by a friend, perhaps an elder wife, to the bridal chamber. We may almost hear the wild beating of her heart and feel the tremulous touch of her red-stained fingers. A sleepy servant avails them with a torch and scent-spray. The light of the torch throws a deep shadow behind the advancing figures. The white marble buildings glisten in the moonlight. The whole picture bears the spell of that strange serenity and recollectedness, that so distinguish the old life of India, and survive so little in the life of non-rhythmic haste and

